"DAYS OF HEAVEN"

An Original Screenplay

by

Terry Malick

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SETTING

The story is set in Texas just before the First World War.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

BILL:	A young man from Chicago following the harvest.
ABBY:	The beautiful young woman he loves.
CHUCK:	The owner of a vast wheat ranch ("bonanza") in the Texas Panhandle.
URSULA:	Abby's younger sister, a reckless child of 14.
BENSON:	The bonanza foreman, an enemy of the newcomers.
MISS CARTER:	Chief domestic at the Belvedere, Chuck's home.
McLEAN:	Chuck's accountant.
GEORGE:	A young pilot who interests Ursula.

A PREACHER, A DOCTOR, AN ORGANIST, VARIOUS HARVEST HANDS, LAWMEN, VAUDEVILLIANS, etc.

"Troops of nomads swept over the country at harvest time like a visitation of locusts, reckless young fellows, handsome, profane, licentious, given to drink, powerful but inconstant workmen, quarrelsome and difficult to manage at all times. They came in the season when work was plenty and wages high. They dressed well, in their own peculiar fashion, and made much of their freedom to come and go."

"They told of the city, and sinister and poisonous jungles all cities seemed in their stories. They were scarred with battles. They came from the far-away and unknown, and passed on to the north, mysterious as the flight of locusts, leaving the people of Sun Prairie quite as ignorant of their real names and characters as upon the first day of their coming."

Hamlin Garland, Boy Life on the Prairie (1899)

"DAYS OF HEAVEN"

1 INT. CHICAGO MILL - SERIES OF ANGLES

WORKERS in a dark Chicago mill pound molten iron out in flaming sheets. The year is 1916.

2 EXT. MILL

BILL, a handsome young man from the slums, and his brother STEVE sit outside on their lunch break talking with an older man named BLACKIE. By the look of his flashy clothes Blackie is not a worker.

BLACKIE
Listen, if I ever seen a tit, this here's a tit. You understand? Candy. My kid sister could do this one. Pure fucking candy'd melt in your hand. Don't take brains. Just a set of rocks. I told you this already.

STEVE
Blackie, you told me it was going to snow in the winter; I'd go out and bet against it. You know?
(to Bill)
There is nothing, nothing in the world, dumber than a dumb guinea.

BLACKIE
Okay, all right, fine. Why should I be doing favors for a guy that isn't doing me any favors? I must be losing my grip.
(pause)
I got to give it to you, though. Couple of guys look like you just rolled in on a wagonload of chickens. You ever get laid?

STEVE
Sure.

BLACKIE
Without a lot of talk, I mean? 'Cause I'm beginning to understand these guys, go down the hotel, pick something up for a couple of bucks. It's clean, and you know what you're in for.

(MORE)

3 EXT. ALLEY

Sam the Collector's GANG swaggers around in the alley behind a textile plant. ONE of them has filed his teeth down to points and stuck diamonds in between them. ANOTHER wears big suspenders.

Sam and Bill appear to know one another.

SAM
Hey, Billy, you made a mistake. You made somebody mad. Nothing personal, okay? It's just gotta be done. You made a mistake. Happens in the best of families.

BILL
I paid you everything I have. Search me. The rest he gets next week.

SAM
Listen, what happens if I don't do this? I gotta leave town?

BILL
I could do something, you know. You guys wanta do something to me, I know who to tell about it. You guys ought to think about that.

SAM
You maybe already did something. Maybe that's why you're here, on account of already done something.

BILL
I haven't done anything.

SAM
Then you're all right, Billy.

RAZOR TEETH
You got nothing to worry about.

SAM
Cut it out, Billy, all right? You know what can happen to a guy that doesn't wanta do what people tell him? You know. So don't give us a lot of trouble. You're liable to get everybody all pissed off.

Sam, a busy man, checks his watch.

4 NEW ANGLE

Bill puts his hand on the ground. Sam drops a keg of roofing nails on it and, his work done, leaves with his gang.

Bill sobs with pain.

5 EXT. LOT BEYOND MILL

Bill and Steve drag a safe by a rope through a vacant lot beyond the mill. Blackie walks behind.

BLACKIE
You know what I'm doing with my end? Buy a boat. Get that? I had a boat. I had a nice apartment, I had a boat. Margie don't like that. We got to have a house. "I can't afford no house," I said. She says, "Sell the boat." I didn't want to sell my boat. I didn't want to buy the house. I sell the boat, I buy the house. Nine years we had the house, eight of them she's after me, we should get another boat. I give up.

STEVE
Same as always, I do all the work, you gripe about it.

Suddenly FOUR POLICEMEN surprise them from ambush. Bill lets go of the rope and starts to run. Steve does not give up immediately, however, and they shoot him down. Bill picks up Steve's gun and fires back. Three of the Policemen go chasing after Blackie, whom they soon bring to heel. The FOURTH stays behind taking potshots at Bill while he attends to Steve.

6 TIGHT ON STEVE

Steve, badly wounded, is about to die.

STEVE
Run. Get out of here.

BILL
(weeping)
I love you so much. Why didn't you run. Don't die.

Steve dies. Bullets kick up dust around him. He takes off running. One of the bullets has caught him in the shoulder.

7 INT. SEWER

ABBY, a beautiful woman in her late twenties, attends to Bill's wounds in a big vaulted sewer. Her sister URSULA, a reckless girl of 14, stands watch.

BILL
(weeping)
They shot the shit out of him. My brother! I couldn't believe what I was seeing.

ABBY
Hold still, or I can't do anything.

BILL
I love you, Abby. You're so good to me. Remember how much fun we had, on the roof...

8 EXT. ROOF - MATTE SHOT

Bill and Abby flirt on the roof of a tenement, happily in love. The city stretches out behind them.

9 INT. BED - QUICK CUT

Abby lies shivering with fever. Bill spoons hot soup into her mouth. Ursula rolls paper flowers for extra change.

BILL (o.s.)
(continuing)
... even when you were sick and I was in the mill.

10 INT. MILL - QUICK CUT (VARIOUS ANGLES OF OTHER WORKERS)

Bill works in the glow of a blast furnace. He does not seem quite in place with the rest of the workers. A pencil moustache lends a desired gentlemanliness to his appearance. He looks fallen on hard times, without ever having known any better -- like Chaplin, an immigrant lost in the heartless city, with dim hopes for a better way of life.

BILL (o.s.)
I won't let you go back in the mill. People die in there. I'm a man, and I can look out for you.

11 EXT. SIDING OUTSIDE MILL

Along a railroad spur outside the mill, Abby and Ursula glean bits of coal that have fallen from the tenders.

BILL (o.s.)
We're going west. Things gotta be better out there.

12 EXT. TENEMENT

A POLICEMAN, looking for Bill, roughs Abby up behind the tenement where they live. Suddenly Bill runs out from a doorway and slams him over the head with a clay pitcher full of water.

POLICEMAN
What'd you do?

Bill shrugs, then hits him again, knocking him unconscious, when he reaches for a gun. Abby calls Ursula and they take off running, Bill stopping only to collect some of their laundry off a clothesline.

13 EXT. FREIGHT YARDS

They hope a freight train.

14 CREDITS (OVER EXISTING PHOTOS)

The CREDITS run over black and white photos of the Chicago they are leaving behind. Pigs roam the gutters. Street urchins smoke cigar butts under a stairway. A blind man hawks stale bread. Dirty children play around a dripping hydrant. Laundry hangs out to dry on tenement fire escapes. Police look for a thief under a bridge. Irish gangs stare at the camera, curious how they will look. The CREDITS end.

15 EXT. MOVING TRAIN

Abby and Bill sit atop a train racing through the wheat country of the Texas Panhandle.

BILL
I like the sunshine.

ABBY
Everybody does.

They laugh. She is dressed in men's clothes, her hair tucked up under a cap. They are sharing a bottle of wine.

BILL
I never wanted to fall in love with you.

ABBY
Nobody asked you to.

He draws her toward him. She pulls away.

BILL
What's the matter? A while ago you said I was irresistible. I still am.

ABBY
That was then.

She pushes her nose up against his chest and sniffs around.

BILL
You playing mousie again?

ABBY
I love how nice and hard your shoulders are. And your hair is light. You're not a soft, greasy guy that puts bay rum on every night.

BILL
I love it when you've been drinking.

ABBY
You're not greasy, Bill. You have any idea what that means?

BILL
Kind of.

They share the boxcar with a crowd of other HARVEST HANDS. Ursula is among them, also dressed like a man. Bill gestures out at the landscape.

BILL
Look at all that space. Oweee! We should've done this a long time ago. It's just us and the road now, Abby.

ABBY
We're all still together, though. That's all I care about.

16 EXT. JERKWATER

The train slows down to take on water. The hands jump off. Each carries his "bindle" -- a blanket and a few personal effects wrapped in canvas. TOUGHS with ax handles are on hand to greet them.

The harvesters speak a Babel of tongues, from German to Uzbek to Swedish. Only English is rare. Some retain odd bits of their national costumes, they are pathetic figures, lonely and dignified and so far from home. Others, in split shoes and sockless feet, are tramps. Most are honest workers, though, here to escape the summer heat in the factories of the East. They dress inappropriately for farm work, in the latest fashions.

BILL
Elbow room! Oweee! Give me a chance and I'm going to dance!

Bill struts around with a Napoleonic air, in a white Panama hat and gaiters, taking in the vista. Under his arm he carries a sword cane with a pearl handle. It pleases him, in this small way, to set himself apart from the rest of toiling humanity. He wants it known that he was born to greater things.

17 NEW ANGLE

Bill comes upon a BIG MAN whose face is covered with blood.

BILL
Good, very good. Where you from, mister?

BIG MAN
Cleveland.

BILL
Like to see the other guy.

Bill helps him to his feet and dusts him off. A TOUGH walks up.

TOUGH
You doing this shit?
(pause)
Then keep it moving.

BILL
Oh yeah? Who're you?

The Tough hits Bill across the head with his ax handle.

TOUGH
Name is Morrison.

Bill looks around to see whether Abby has seen this. She hasn't. He walks dizzily off down the tracks.

18 NEW ANGLE

He takes Abby by the arm.

ABBY
What happened to your ear?

BILL
Nothing.

She is a sultry beauty -- emancipated, full of bright hopes and a zest for life. Her costume does not fool the men. Wherever she goes they ogle her insolently.

19 EXT. WAGONS

The FOREMEN of the surrounding farms wait by their wagons to carry the workers off. A flag pole is planted by each wagon. Those who do not speak English negotiate their wages on a blackboard.

BENSON, a leathery man of fifty, bellows through a megaphone. In the background a NEWCOMER to the harvest talks with a VETERAN.

BENSON
Shockers! Four more and I'm leaving.

BILL
How much you paying?

BENSON
Man can make three dollars a day, he wants to work.

BILL
Who're you kidding?

Bill mills around. They have no choice but to accept his offer.

BENSON
Sackers!

Abby steps up. Benson takes her for a young man.

BENSON
You ever sacked before?

She nods.

NEWCOMER (o.s.)
How's the pussy out here?

VETERAN (o.s.)
Not good. Where you from?

NEWCOMER (o.s.)
Detroit.

VETERAN (o.s.)
How's the pussy up there?

NEWCOMER (o.s.)
Good.
(pause)

NEWCOMER (o.s.)
The guys tough out here?

VETERAN (o.s.)
Not so tough. How about up there?

NEWCOMER (o.s.)
Tough.

BENSON
When's that?

ABBY
Last year.

He waves her on. Abby nods at Ursula.

ABBY
You're making a mistake, you pass this kid up.

BENSON
Get on.

He snaps his fingers at her. Bill climbs up ahead of the women. Anger makes him extremely polite.

BILL
You don't need to say it like that.

Benson ignores this remark but dislikes Bill from the first.

20 EXT. PLAINS

Benson's wagons roll across the plains toward the Razumihin, a "bonanza" or wheat ranch of spectacular dimensions, its name spelled out in whitewashed rocks on the side of a hill.

21 EXT. BONANZA GATES (NEAR SIGN)

The wagons pass under a large arch, set in the middle of nowhere, like the gates to a vanished kingdom. Goats peer down from on top.

Bill looks at Abby and raises his eyebrows.

22 EXT. BELVEDERE

At the center of the bonanza, amid a tawny sea of grain, stands a gay Victorian house, three stories tall. Where most farm houses stand more sensibly on low ground, protected from the elements, "The Belvedere" occupies the highest ridge around, commanding the view and esteem of all.

Filigrees of gingerbread adorn the eaves. Cottonwood saplings, six feet high, have recently been planted in the front. Peacocks fuss about the yard. There is a lawn swing and a flag pole, used like a ship's mast for signaling distant parts of the bonanza. A wind generator supplies electric power.

A white picket fence surrounds the house, though its purpose is unclear; where the prairie leaves off and the yard begins is impossible to tell.

Bison drift over the hills like boats on the ocean. Bill shouts at the nearest one.

BILL
Yo, Beevo!

23 TIGHT ON CHUCK

CHUCK ARTUNOV, the owner -- a man of great reserve and dignity, still a bachelor -- stands on the front porch of the Belvedere high above, observing the new arrivals.

24 EXT. DORMITORY

Benson drops the hands off at the dormitory, a hundred yards below, a plain clapboard building with a ceiling of exposed joists. Ursula sees Chuck watching them.

URSULA
Whose place is that?

BENSON
The owner's. Don't none of you go up around his place. First one that does is fired. I'm warning you right now.

In the warm July weather most of the hands forsake the dorm to spread their bedrolls around a strawpile or in the hayloft of the nearby barn.

Abby and Bill slip off to share a cigarette. Ursula tags behind.

25 EXT. ROCK

Bill lifts a big rock. Abby applauds. Ursula kneels down behind him. Abby pushes him over backwards.

26 EXT. BARN

Ursula gasps as Abby tumbles off the roof of the barn and falls through the air screaming:

ABBY
Urs!

She lands in a straw pile.

27 TIGHT ON ABBY AND BILL

Bill takes Abby by the hands, spins her around until she is thoroughly dizzy, then grasps her across the chest.

BILL
Ready?

She giggles her consent. He crushes her in a bear hug until she is just on the verge of passing out, then lets her go. She sinks to the grass, in a daze of sweet intoxication.

28 EXT. LANTERN - NIGHT

Bill looks deeply into Abby's eyes by the light of a lantern that night. They have made a shallow cut on their thumbs and press them together mixing their blood like children.

BILL
You're all I've got, Abby. No, really, everything I ever had is a complete piece of garbage except you.

ABBY
I know.

They laugh. He bends to kiss her. She pulls away.

BILL
Sometimes I think you don't like men.

ABBY
As individuals? Very seldom.

She kisses him lovingly.

29 EXT. WHEAT FIELDS - DAWN

The sun peers over the horizon. The wheat makes a sound like a waterfall. It stretches for as far as the eye can see. A PREACHER has come out, in a cassock and surplice, to offer prayers of thanksgiving.

PREACHER
"... that your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the Lord swore unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth."

The harvesters spit and rub their hands as they wait for the dew to burn off. They have slept in their coats. The dawn has a raw edge, even in summer.

30 TIGHT ON WHEAT

Chuck looks to see if the wheat is ready to harvest. He shakes the heads; they make a sound like paper. He snaps off a handful, rolls them between his palms, blows away the chaff and pinches the kernels that remain to make sure they have grown properly hard.

Tiny sounds are magnified in the early morning stillness: grasshoppers snapping through the air, a cough, a distant hawk.

He pops the kernels into his mouth, chews them up, and rolls the wad around in his mouth. Satisfied, he spits it out and gives a nod. The Preacher begins a prayer of thanksgiving. Two ACOLYTES flank him, one with a smoking censer, the other with a crucifix.

All repeat the "Amen." Benson makes a tugging signal with his arm. A Case tractor -- forty tons of iron, steam-driven, as big and as powerful as a locomotive -- blasts its whistle. This is the moment they have been waiting all year for.

31 OTHER FIELDS - SERIES OF ANGLES

A SIGNALMAN with two hand flags passes the message on from the crest of a nearby hill. In the far-flung fields of the bonanza other tractors answer as other crews set to work.

Abby and Bill join in, Bill reaping the wheat with a mowing machine called a binder, Abby propping the bound sheaves together to make bunches or "shocks."

A cloud of chaff rises over the field, melting the sun down to a cold red bulb.

Abby is well turned out, in a boater and string tie, as though she were planning any moment to leave for a picnic.

Bill, too, dresses with an eye to flashy fashion: Tight dark trousers, a silk handkerchief stuck in the back pocket with a copy of the Police Gazette, low-top calfskin boots with high heels and pointed toes, a shirt with ruffled cuffs, and a big signet ring. While at work he wears a white smock over all this to keep the chaff off. It gives him the air more of a researcher than a worker.

The harvesters itch madly as the chaff gets into their clothes. The shocks, full of briars, cut their hands; smut and rust make the cuts sting like fire. Nobody talks. From time to time they raise a chant.

Ursula, plucking chickens by the cookhouse -- a shack on wheels -- steals a key chain from an unwatched coat.

Benson follows the reapers around the field in a buggy. He keeps their hours, chides loafers, checks the horses, etc. The harvesters are city people. Few of them are trained to farming. Most -- Abby and Bill are no exception -- have contempt for it and anybody dull enough to practice it. Tight control is therefore exercised to see that the machines are not damaged.

Where the others loaf whenever Benson's back is turned, Bill works like a demon, as a point of pride.

32 CHUCK AND BENSON

Lightning shivers through the clouds along the horizon. Chuck looks concerned. Benson consults a windsock.

BENSON
Should miss us.

CHUCK
They must be having trouble over there, though.

Abby, passing by, lifts her hat to wipe her face. As she does her hair falls out of the crown. Women are rare in the harvest fields. One so beautiful is unprecedented.

CHUCK
I didn't know we had any women on.

BENSON
(surprised)
I thought she was a boy. Should I get rid of her?

CHUCK
No.

33 MONTAGE

A COOK stands on the horizon waving a white flag at the end of a fishing pole. Ursula bounds through the wheat blowing a horn.

Benson consults the large clock strapped to the back of his buggy, then fires a smoke pistol in the air.

Their faces black with chaff, the hands fall out in silence. They shuffle across the field toward the cookhouse, keeping their feet close to the ground to avoid being spiked by the stubble.

34 EXT. COOKHOUSE - STUBBLE FIELD IN B.G.

The COOKS, Orientals in homburgs, serve from planks thrown across sawhorses. The hands cuff and push each other around as they wash up. The water, brought up fresh in wagons from the wells, makes them gasp. An ice wagon and a fire truck are parked nearby.

Most sit on the ground to eat, under awnings or beach umbrellas dotted around the field like toadstools. The Belvedere is visible miles away on the horizon.

Bill is carrying Abby's lunch to her when a loutish DUTCHMAN makes a crack.

DUTCHMAN
Your sister keep you warm at night?

Bill throws a plate of stew at him and they are quickly in a fight. No fists are used, just food. The others pull them apart. Bill storms away, flicking mashed potatoes off his shirt.

35 EXT. GRAIN WAGON - STUBBLE FIELD IN B.G.

Bill and Abby sit by themselves in the shade of a grain wagon. Demoralized, Abby soaks her hands in a pail of bran water. Bill inspects them anxiously. They are swollen and cracked from the morning's work.

ABBY
I ran a stubble under my nail.

BILL
Didn't you ever learn how to take care of yourself? I told you to keep the gloves on. What can I do if you don't listen?

Bill presses her wrists against his cheek, ashamed that he can do nothing to shield her from such indignities. In the b.g. a MAN with a fungo bat hits flies to SOME MEN with baseball gloves.

BILL
You can't keep on like this.

ABBY
What else can we do?

She nods at the others.

ABBY
Anyway, if they can, I can too.

BILL
That bunch? Don't compare yourself to them.

She flexes her fingers. They seem lame.

BILL
You drop off this week. I can make enough for us both. It was a crime to bring you out here. Somebody like you.
(pause)
Right now, what I'm doing, I'm just dragging you down.
(pause)
Maybe you should go back to Chicago. We've got enough for a ticket, and I can send you what I make.

He seems a little surprised when she does not reject this idea out of hand. Perhaps he fears that if she ever did go back, he might never see her again.

BILL
What's the matter?

She begins to cry. He takes her in his arms.

BILL
I know how you feel, honey. Things won't always be this way. I promise.

36 ABBY AND BILL - CHUCK'S POV

The men knock out their pipes as Benson's whistle summons them back to their stations.

BENSON
Tick tock! Tick tock! Nothing moving but the clock!

Bill pulls Abby to her feet. He sees the Dutchman he fought with and shoots him the finger.

ABBY
You better be careful.

BILL
Of him? He's just a sack of shit.

ABBY
Stop it! He's liable to see you.

BILL
I want him to. He's the one better be careful.

37 TIGHT ON CHUCK

Chuck looks on. Something about her captivates him, not so much her beauty -- which only makes her seem beyond his reach -- as the way she takes it utterly for granted.

38 MONTAGE (DISSOLVES)

The work goes on through the afternoon. The pace is stern and incessant, and for a reason: a storm could rise at any moment and sweep the crops flat, or a dry wind shrivel them up. A series of dissolves gives the sense of many days passing.

Animals -- snakes and gophers, rabbits and foxes -- dart through the field into the deep of the wheat, not realizing their sanctuary is growing ever smaller as the reapers make their rounds. The moment will come when they will every one be killed with rakes and flails.

The wheat changes colors in the wind, like velvet. As the sun drops toward the horizon a dew sets, making the straw hard to cut. Benson fires his pistol. A vine of smoke sinks lazily through the sky. As the workers move off, the fields grow vast and inhospitable.

Oil wells can be seen here and there amid the grain.

39 EXT. ABBY'S ROW

Bill helps Abby finish up a row. Thousands of shocks stretch out in the distance. Benson comes up behind her, making a spray of the stalks that she missed.

BENSON
You must've passed over a dozen bushels here. I'm docking you three dollars.

BILL
What're you talking about? That's not fair.

BENSON
Then leave. You're fired.

Abby is speechless. Bill squeezes the small rubber ball which he carries around to improve his grip and swallows his pride.

BILL
Wait a minute.

BENSON
You want to stay?
(pause)
Then shut up and get back to work.

Benson leaves. Abby covers Bill's embarrassment.

BILL
I guess he meant it.

She turns her back to him and goes about picking up the sheaf Benson threw down.

BILL
He did. Ask him. If you can't sing or dance, what do you do in this world? You might as well forget it.

40 EXT. STOCK POND - DUSK

Their day's work done the men swim naked in a stock pond. Their faces are black, their bodies white as a baby's. A retriever plunges through the water fetching sticks.

41 EXT. ROAD - DUSK

Some bowl with their hats on in a dusty road and argue in Italian.

42 EXT. BELVEDERE - DOCTOR'S WAGON - DUSK

A physician's wagon stands in front of the Belvedere. Bill hunts nervously through it for medicine to soothe Abby's hands. Not knowing quite what to look for, he sniffs whatever catches his eye.

Suddenly the front door opens and Chuck steps out with a DOCTOR, a stooped old man in a black frock coat. Bill, surprised, crouches behind the wheel. As they draw closer their conversation becomes faintly audible.

CHUCK (o.s.)
How long you give it?

DOCTOR (o.s.)
Could be next month. Could be a year. Hard to say. Anyway, I'm sorry.

CHUCK (o.s.)
Got to happen sometime.

They shake hands.

43 NEW ANGLE - DUSK

The Doctor snaps his whip at the horses. Bill grabs hold of the back of the wagon and lets it drag him away from the Belvedere.

44 EXT. BARN - DUSK

Ursula and Abby case the barn for dinner. Abby points at a pair of peacocks strutting by, nods to Ursula and puts a finger over her lips. Ursula, with a giggle, follows one while Abby stalks the other.

45 EXT. RAPESEED FIELD - SERIES OF ANGLES - DUSK

The peacock, a resplendent white, leads Abby through a bright yellow rapeseed field. It keeps just out of reach, as though it were enticing her on.

All at once she looks up with a start. Chuck is standing in front of her, dressed in his habitual black. The Belvedere rises behind him like a castle in a fairy tale. She remembers Benson's warning that this is forbidden ground.

ABBY
(afraid)
I forgot where I was.

CHUCK
Don't worry. Where you from?

ABBY
Chicago.

CHUCK
We hardly ever see a woman on the harvest.

There is a small rip in the side of her shirt, which the camera observes with Chuck. She pulls her sweater over it.

CHUCK
You like the work?
(she shrugs)
Where do you go from here?

ABBY
Wyoming and places. I've never been up that way. You think I'll like it?

He shrugs. Shy at first, she begins to open up.

ABBY
That dog belongs to you that was running around here? That little pointer?
(he nods)
What's his name?

CHUCK
Buster.

ABBY
He seems like a good dog.

CHUCK
I think so.

ABBY
He came over and tried to eat my bread from lunch.

CHUCK
Maybe I should keep him penned up.

ABBY
(smiling)
You asking me?

46 EXT. SPIT - DUSK

Bill finds Ursula roasting a peacock on a spit. She has arranged some of its tail feathers in her hair.

BILL
You're getting prettier every day.

URSULA
Aren't you sweet!

BILL
Depends how people are with me. Where's Abby? I found her something.

He holds out a jar of salve. Ursula shrugs.

BILL
She mention anything to you about going back?
(pause)
What?

Ursula has no idea what he is talking about.

47 EXT. STRAW STACK - MAGIC HOUR

Most of the workers are fast asleep around the strawpile, their bodies radiating out like the spokes of a wheel. A few stay up late to shoot dice in the back of a wagon.

48 EXT. SEPARATE STACK - MAGIC HOUR

Abby and Bill have laid their bedrolls out by a stack away from the others. A fire burns nearby. Abby looks at the stars. Bill shines his shoes. The straw is fragrant as thyme.

ABBY
I've had it.

BILL
You're tired, that's all. I'm going to find you another blanket.

ABBY
No, it's not that. I'm not tired. I just can't.

BILL
Don't you want to be with me?

ABBY
You know I do. It's just that, well, I'm not a bum, Bill.

BILL
I know. I told you, though, this is only for a while. Then we're going to New York.

ABBY
And after that?

BILL
Then we're there. Then we get fixed up.

ABBY
You mean spend one night in a flophouse and start looking for work.

They are silent for a moment.

BILL
You should go back.

ABBY
And leave you? I couldn't do that.
(pause)
Someday, when I'm dying, I'd like somebody to ask me if I still see life the same way as before -- and I'd like them to write down what I say. It might be interesting.

Suddenly they look around. The chief domestic at the Belvedere, a churlish lady named MISS CARTER, stands above them with a salver of fruit and roast fowl.

BILL
(suspicious)
What's going on? Who sent it?

She nods up toward the Belvedere and sets it down.

BILL
What for?

She withdraws with a shrug. She does not appear to relish this duty. Bill watches her walk back to the buggy she came down in. Benson waits beside it.

BILL
(to Abby)
She's the kind wouldn't tell you if your coat was on fire.

49 NEW ANGLE - MAGIC HOUR

Abby, with the look of a child that has wandered into a magic world, digs in. Bill looks on, suspicious of the motives behind this generosity.

50 EXT. FIELD WITH OIL WELL - URSULA'S THEME - MAGIC HOUR

A bank of clouds moves across the moon. Ursula roams the fields, keen with unsatisfied intelligence. The stubble hisses as a hot wind blows up from the South, driving bits of grain into her face like sleet. From time to time she does a cartwheel.

Equipment cools in the fields. Little jets of steam escape the boilers of the tractors.

Ursula stops in front of a donkey well. It nods up and down in ceaseless agreement, pumping up riches from deep in the earth.

51 EXT. BEDROOM WINDOW - MAGIC HOUR

The camera moves through the bedroom window to find Chuck asleep on his pillow. The wind taps the curtain into the room.

52 EXT. FATHER IN CHAIR - QUICK CUT

Chuck dreams of a Biblical figure with a long plaited beard, in a frock coat and Astrakhan hat, sitting in a chair on the open prairie, guarding his land with a brace of guns. This man will later be identified as his FATHER.

53 EXT. FIELDS - DAY

The next day Benson yells through a megaphone from atop a stool.

BENSON
Hold your horses!

The huge tractors start up with a bang. Despite Benson's warning a team of Percherons breaks free. Threshing, the separating of the wheat from the chaff, has begun.

54 EXT. SEPARATOR - SERIES OF ANGLES

Sixty foot belts connect the tractors to the separating machines, huge rattletrap devices that shell the wheat out at deafening volume. Benson tosses bundles down the hissing maw, squirts oil into the gears, tightens belts, chews out a MAN who's sliced a hand on the driveshaft, etc.

Bill works on the straw pile at the back of the machine, in a soft rain of chaff, spreading it out with a pitchfork.

Ursula helps stoke the tractor with coal and water. When nothing is required of her she sneaks off to burrow in the straw.

Gingerbread on the eaves of the tractors gives them a Victorian appearance. Tall flags mark their position in the field.

Abby moves quickly, without a moment's rest, sewing up the sacks of grain as they are measured out at the bottom of the separator. A clowning WORKER comes up and smells her like a flower.

55 EXT. GRAIN ELEVATORS

Fully laden wagons set off toward distant grain elevators.

56 EXT. COUCH ON RIDGE

Chuck and McLEAN, his accountant, sit on a ridge away from the chaff, in the shade of a beach umbrella.

Chuck keeps track of operations through a telescope. Our last view of Abby, we realize, was from his POV. A plush Empire couch has been drawn up for him to rest in. At a table beside it, McLean computes the yield.

McLEAN
This must be wrong. No, dammit, nineteen bushels an acre.

Chuck sails his hat out in the stubble with a whoop. McLean leans over his adding machine, cackling like a thief.

McLEAN
Say it goes at fifty-five cents a bushel, that means a profit of four dollars and seventy-five cents per acre. Multiply by twenty thousand and you're talking over six figures.

CHUCK
Big year.

McLEAN
Your biggest ever. This could make you the richest man in the Panhandle.
(pause)
You ought to get out while you're this far ahead. You'll never do better. I mean it. You have nothing to gain by staying.

CHUCK
I want to expand. I want to run this land clear to the Oklahoma border. Next spring I will

McLEAN
And gamble everything?
(he nods)
You're crazy.

CHUCK
I been out here all my life. Selling this place would be like cutting my heart out. This is the only home I ever had. This is where I belong. Besides, I don't want to live in town. I couldn't take my dogs.

57 CHUCK'S POV - TELESCOPE MATTE

Chuck takes another look at Abby through the telescope.

58 EXT. BUGGY

Bill drinks from the water barrel at the back of Benson's buggy, his eyes fixed on Chuck's distant figure.

BILL
Big place here.

BENSON
The President's going to pay a visit next time he comes West.

BILL
Got a smoke?

BENSON
No.

Bill puts his hat back on. He keeps wet cottonwood leaves in the crown to cool himself off.

BILL
Why's that guy drag an expensive piece of furniture out here? Reason I ask is he's going to ruin the finish and have to strip it.

Benson hesitates, uncertain whether he might be divulging a confidence.

BENSON
He's not well.

BILL
What's the matter with him?

Benson immediately regrets having spoken so freely. He checks his watch to suggest Bill should get back to work. This uneasiness confirms Bill's sense that Chuck is gravely ill.

59 EXT. SEPARATOR - DUSK

Abby is sewing up her last sacks by the separator that evening when Chuck walks up, still in the flush of McLean's good news.

The others have finished and left to wash up. He sits down and helps her. Shy and upright, he does not know quite how to behave with a woman.

CHUCK
Probably be all done tomorrow.
(pause)
You still plan on going North?

She nods and draws her last stitch. Chuck musters his courage. It must be now or never.

CHUCK
Reason I ask is maybe you'd like to stay on. Be easier than now. There's hardly any work after harvest. The pay is just as good, though. Better in fact.

ABBY
Why're you offering me this? My honest face?

Chuck takes a moment to compose his reply.

CHUCK
I've watched you work. Think about it.

ABBY
Maybe I will.

She backs off toward Bill, who is waiting in the distance.

CHUCK
Who's that?

ABBY
(hesitant)
My brother. . .

Chuck nods.

60 NEW ANGLE - DUSK

She joins Bill. He gives her a melon, wanting to pick up her spirits.

BILL
This is all I could find. You feeling better?
(she shrugs)
What'd he want?

They look at each other.

61 EXT. RIVER - DUSK

As Bill and Abby bathe in the river that evening, he tells her what he seems to have learned about Chuck's state of health. Down the way Ursula sits under a tree playing a guitar. Otherwise they are alone. They all wear bathing suits, Bill a shirt as well.

BILL
It must be something wrong with his lungs.
(pause)
He doesn't have a family, either.

ABBY
So what?

Bill shrugs. Does he have to draw her a picture? A shy, virginal light has descended over the world. Cranes peer at them from the tamarack.

BILL
Tell him you'll stay.

ABBY
What for?

Bill is wondering what might happen if Chuck got interested enough to marry her. Isn't he soon to die, leaving a vast inheritance that will otherwise go to waste?

BILL
You know I love you, don't you?

ABBY
Yes.

Abby guesses what is going through his mind, and it shocks her.

ABBY
Oh, Bill!

He takes her into his arms, full of emotion.

BILL
What else can we really do? I know how you feel, but we keep on this way, in five years we'll be washed up.

He catches a stick drifting by and throws it further down stream.

BILL
You ever think about all those ladies parading up and down Michigan Avenue? Bunch of whores! You're better than any of them. You ever think how they got where <u>they</u> are?

He wants to breathe hope into her. He thinks of himself as responding to what she needs and secretly wants. When she does not answer he gives up with a sigh.

BILL
Let's forget it.

ABBY
I know what you mean, though.

He takes her hand, with fresh hope of convincing her.

BILL
We weren't meant to end up like this. At least you weren't. You could <u>be</u> something. I've heard you sing. You have a lot of fine qualities that need to come out. Ursula, too. What kind of people is she meeting up with, riding the rods? The girl's never had a clean shot, never will. She oughta be in <u>school</u>.

ABBY
(nodding)
You couldn't even think like this if you really loved me.

BILL
But I do. You know I do. This just shows how much. We're shit out of luck, Abby. People <u>need</u> luck. What're you crying about? Oh, don't tell me. I already know. All on account of your unhappy life and all that stuff. Well, we gotta do something about it, honey. We can't expect anybody else to.

Abby runs into the woods.

BILL
Always the lady! Well, you don't know how things work in this country. This is why every hunkie I ever met is going nowhere.
(pause)
Why do you want to make me feel worse than I already do?
(MORE)

BILL (CONT'D)
(pause)
You people get hold of the guy that's passing out dough, give him my name, would you? I'd appreciate it.

62 TIGHT ON BILL

Bill skims rocks off the water to calm himself down. He feels that somehow he did not get to say what he wanted to.

63 EXT. WOODS BY RIVER

Abby is dressing in the cool woven shade of the woods when Ursula, her face caked with a mask of river mud, jumps from the bushes with a shriek, scaring the wits out of her sister

64 EXT. BELVEDERE - DUSK

On their way home they pass the Belvedere. A single light burns on the second floor. Abby picks cornflowers to put in her hair. Bill runs his hand down her back.

ABBY
Why're you touching me that way?

He shrugs. Muffled by the walls of the house, above the cries of the peafowl, they can faintly hear Chuck singing to himself.

BILL
He's singing.

ABBY
He can't be too sick if he's singing to himself.

BILL
He might be singing to God.

They look at each other and smile. It does not appear that she has held what he said by the river against him.

Bill stands for a moment and looks up at the Belvedere before passing on.

65 EXT. SEPARATOR, LAST SHEAVES, RATS

Work goes on the next day. As they near the last sheaves of unthreshed grain, hundreds of rats burst out of hiding. The harvesters go after them with shovels and stones. The dogs chase down the ones that escape.

66 BENSON AND CHUCK

Benson and Chuck smile at each other.

BENSON
We should be done around four.

They improvise a chat about past harvests. Years of shared hardship have drawn them close. Chuck trails off in the middle of a reminiscence. Something else is weighing on his mind.

CHUCK
(shyly)
You put her on the slowest machine?

Benson nods.

67 NEW ANGLE

The threshing is done. A bundle is pitched into the separator backwards, snapping it abruptly to a stop. The drive belt whips along the ground like a mad snake.

68 EXT. PAYROLL TABLE

All hands line up at the payroll table.

McLean gives out their wages in twists of newspaper. Chuck and Benson shake their hands.

69 TIGHT ON BILL AND SORROWFUL MAN

A SORROWFUL MAN shows Bill a picture of a woman.

SORROWFUL MAN
And I let somebody like that get away from me. Redhead. Lost her to a guy named Ed. Shit, I just sat around and let it happen. Should've gone out there outside the city limits and shot him. I just about did, too.
(pause)
If you're knocking yourself out like this, I hope it's for a woman. And I hope she's good looking. You understand?

70 TIGHT ON ABBY AND URSULA

Abby snatches a cigarette out of Ursula's mouth, takes a drag and throws it away. When Ursula goes to pick it up, she stamps it out.

ABBY
Don't spend a cent of that.

URSULA
Why don't you leave me alone?

ABBY
I'm not going to sit around and watch you throw your life away. Nobody's going to look at you twice if you've got nothing to your name.

Ursula dislikes meddlesome adults. She takes out a pouch of tobacco to roll another cigarette. Abby swats it out of her hand and chases her off.

ABBY
You want me to cut a switch?

71 SERIES OF ANGLES - FESTIVITIES - DUSK

There are feats of strength and prowess as workers from the many fields of the bonanza join to celebrate the harvest home: boxing, wrestling, barrel jumping, rooster bouts, bear hugs, "Crack the Whip" and nut fights. Two tractors, joined by a heavy chain, vie to see which can outpull the other. Chuck lifts the back wheel of the separator off the ground; Benson replies by holding an anvil at arm's length; they tease each other about showing off. A GYMNAST does flips. They all seem happy as kids on holiday.

72 NEW ANGLE

Bill and Ursula share a cigarette. Ursula tries on his sunglasses.

URSULA
We going to stay?

BILL
If she wants to.

URSULA
You'd rather go?

Bill, after a moment's thought, shrugs.

BILL
She's the one has to say. You put aspirin in this?

URSULA
No.

She hands back his sunglasses.

BILL
Keep them.

73 EXT. MUD PIT - DUSK

Two TEAMS of harvesters have a tug of war. The losers are dragged through a pit of mud. Cradling handfuls of slime, they chase the winners off into the dusk.

74 BILL AND ABBY - DUSK

Bill finds Abby sitting off by herself, wanting no part of the festivities. This is the first time since their arrival in Texas we have seen her wearing a dress.

BILL
Sunny Jim, look at this. My first ice cream in six months. And the lady even asks do I want sprinkles on top, thank you. Big, deep dish of ice cream. You couldn't pay me to leave this place, Got you one, too. You should've heard the line I had to give her, though. Oowee!

ABBY
Good, huh?

BILL
Great.

ABBY
Now you're trying to coax me. You never used to act like this.

Bill throws down the bowls of ice cream. In the distance, some MEN compete at throwing a sledge hammer.

BILL
For as long as I can remember, people been giving me a hard time about one thing or another. Don't you start in, too!

ABBY
You want to turn me into a whore?

BILL
We don't have to decide anything final now. Just if we're going to stay. You never have to touch him if you don't feel like it. Minute you get fed up, we take off. Worst that can happen is we had it soft for a while.

ABBY
Something's made you mean.

She walks off, uncertain what Bill really wants.

BILL
Or else we can forget it. I'm not going to spend the whole afternoon on this, though. That I'm not going to do.

75 ISOLATED ON CHUCK

Chuck watches from a distance, fearful that tonight may be the last he will ever see of her.

76 TIGHT ON ABBY, EFFIGY, MARS, ETC.

The harvesters shape and dress the final sheaf as a woman. The LAST of them to finish that day carries the effigy at the end of the pole to the Belvedere. His mates follow behind, jeering and throwing dirt clods at him.

Abby watches. We sense that anything she sees might figure in her decision.

Mars hangs low and red in the western sky.

77 URSULA AND DRUNK

Ursula is looking at her figure in a pocket mirror when a DRUNK appears behind her.

DRUNK
See what happens to you? Little shit. Get out there and make that big money and don't spend time dicking around.

78 EXT. PIT OF COALS - DUSK

A feast is laid on. ONE PERSON rolls a flaming wheel down a hill. ANOTHER sets off a string of firecrackers. GERMANS pelt each other with spareribs. Ursula [illegible] hogsheads out of a pit of hot coals. The YOUNGER MEN [illegible] her. She is too much of a tomboy to interest any [illegible] seriously. The effigy sits off in a chair by itself, ignored.

79 TIGHT ON ABBY AND CHUCK - DUSK

Chuck awaits Abby's answer.

ABBY
There's a problem. I have to keep my baby sister with me. Someday I'm going to save up enough, see, and send her to school.
(pause)
My brother, too. I can't leave him.

Abby fears she has asked too much. Chuck hesitates, but only to suggest he still has the prudence he long since has abandoned.

CHUCK
There's work for them, too.

ABBY
Really?

80 EXT. BONFIRE - DUSK

A bonfire burns like a huge eye in the vat of the prairie night. The band strikes up a reel.

Chuck and Abby lead the dancing off, as though to celebrate their agreement. Their giant shadows dance with them. Soon the other harvesters join in.

81 TIGHT ON BILL - DUSK

Bill watches Abby dance -- it almost seems in farewell to their innocence. After a moment he turns off into the night.

82 MONTAGE - NIGHT

The effigy is held over the flame at the end of a pole until it catches fire. The harvesters prance around in the dark, trading it from hand to hand.

The MUSICIANS, drunk and happy, bow their hearts out.

83 TIGHT ON BILL - DAWN

While the others pursue their merriment, Bill walks the fields by himself, trembling with grief and indecision.

Dawn is breaking. The eastern sky glows like a forge. Suddenly he comes upon a wolf. He catches his breath. The wolf stares back at him for a moment, then turns and pads off into the stubble.

84 EXT. RAILROAD TRACKS - DAWN

Early the next morning the HARVESTERS wander by the hundreds down to the railroad tracks to catch a train for the North, where the crops are just now coming into maturity. A subtle feeling of sadness pervades the group.

Bill gives his sword cane away to a MAN who seems to have admired it. The Man offers him money, but he declines it.

85 EXT. TRAIN - URSULA AND JOHN - LATER

Ursula says goodbye to her favorite, a redhead named JOHN. She is hoarse, as always.

JOHN
Why don't you come with us?

URSULA
They won't let me. So when am I going to see you again?

JOHN
Maybe in Cheyenne.

She nods okay. They both know they will never see each other again. On a sudden impulse she gives him a love note.

JOHN
What's this?

She takes it back immediately, but he snatches it away from her and, after a brief, giggling scuffle, hops aboard the train, now picking up speed. Ursula runs along behind, cursing and throwing rocks at him.

86 TIGHT ON BILL AND ABBY

Bill and Abby look on.

BILL
I told her, "none of my business Urs, I just hope you're not rolling around with some redhead is all." She looks me over. "Why?" she says, "What've you guys got that redheads don't?" I pity that kid.

Ursula runs up and throws herself tearfully into Abby's arms.

BILL
What's the matter? What'd he do?

Bill starts off after the train.

87 EXT. "SHEEP POWER"

Abby tends a washing machine driven by a sheep on a treadmill. Chuck watches from the front steps of the Belvedere.

ABBY
I'm just about done with this.

CHUCK
Good.

ABBY
So what's next?

CHUCK
Next?

ABBY
There's nothing else you want done?

CHUCK
Not that I can think of. Not right now.

Miss Carter, the housekeeper, steps out on the porch and pours a bucket of milk into a cream separator.

ABBY
How about the cream?

CHUCK
She takes care of that.

He nods at Miss Carter, who conspicuously lets the screen door clap shut as she goes back inside. She misses no opportunity to express her disdain for these newcomers.

She and Benson are the only employees seen at the Belvedere. Several dozen others have stayed on after the harvest but they keep to their quarters down at the dorm.

ABBY
You mean I'm done for today?

CHUCK
(uncomfortably)
Something else might come up.

In truth, Chuck does not want to see Abby degraded by menial labor, considering her more a guest than an employee. They look at each other. Abby does not know quite what to make of him.

ABBY
Well, I'm going back to the dorm..

CHUCK
Is everything okay down there? In the way of accommodations, I mean.

She nods and waves goodbye.

88 EXT. BARN

Down by the barn Bill teaches Chuck how to shoot dice. Chuck feigns interest.

BILL
I like to gamble, and I like to win. I make no bones about it. Got to where the guys on Throop Street wouldn't even lag pennies with me on account of I was such a winner. I'm starting out level with you, you understand.

CHUCK
Have you ever been in trouble with the law?

Bill looks around. Abby would think it impolitic of him to speak so openly with Chuck.

BILL
Nothing they could make stick. My problem has always been not having the education. I bullshitted my way into school. They gave me a test. It was ridiculous. I got in fights. Ended up paying for a window. They threw me out. Don't blame them either. Still, I wanted to make something of myself. I mean, guys look at you across a desk, you know what they're thinking. So I went in the mill. Couldn't wait to get in there. Begin at seven, got to have a smile on your face. Didn't work out, though. No matter what you do, sometimes things just don't go right. It gets to you after a while. It gives you that feeling, "Oh hell, what's the use?"
(pause)
My dad told me, forget what the people around you are doing. You got enough to worry about without considering what somebody else does. Otherwise you get fouled up. He used to say

(MORE)

BILL (CONT'D)
(tapping his temple)
"All you got is this." Only one day you wake up, find you're not the smartest guy in the world, never going to come up with the big score. I really believed when I was growing up that somehow I would. I worked like a bastard in that mill. I felt all right about it, though. I felt that somewhere along the line somebody would see I had that special gleam. "Hey, you, come over here." So then I'd go.

They are silent for a moment.

CHUCK
You seem close to your sister.

BILL
Yeah. We've been together since we were kids. You like her, don't you?
(pause)
She likes you, too.

Chuck locks down, feeling transparent in the pleasure he takes at this news.

89 TIGHT ON ABBY

The camera moves back to reveal Abby listening in from the other side of the barn. Her eyes are full of tears. How can Bill prize her so lightly?

BILL (o.s.)
Don't get the wrong idea, though.

90 ISOLATED ON BILL - LATER

Bill sits on the ground reading his Police Gazette. Abby walks up and without a word of explanation, slaps him. He jumps up and protests but quickly tapers off. She turns on her heel and leaves.

Bill sits down feeling misunderstood and abused. Does she think all this pleases him?

91 EXT. FAIRY RINGS (PRAIRIE)

Chuck, out for a stroll with Abby and Ursula, shows them a fairy ring — a colony of mushrooms growing in a circle thirty feet across.

URSULA
I heard you farmers were big and dumb. You aren't so big. Where do they learn how to?

ABBY
They're so darling! Can you eat them?

Chuck nods. Abby snaps the mushrooms off flush at the ground. The music underscores this moment.

She smiles at Chuck as she eats the dark earthy flesh.

92 EXT. POST

They pitch rocks at a post and exchange intimacies. Abby has grown more lively.

ABBY
You know, sometimes I think there might have been a mixup at the hospital where I was born and that I could actually be the interesting daughter of some big financier. Nobody would actually know.
(pause)
Are you in love with me, Chuck, or why are you always so nervous?

CHUCK
(stumbling)
Maybe I am. I must be.

ABBY
Why? On account of something I've done?

CHUCK
Because you're so beautiful.

ABBY
What a nice thing to say. Look, I hit it. Did you see?

She goes right on with their game, as though she attached no great importance to his momentous declaration.

93 TIGHT ON CHUCK AND ABBY - LATER

Chuck takes Abby's hand for the first time. Abby, startled, gives him a gentle smile, then lets go.

ABBY
What about my shoes? Aren't they pretty?

94 EXT. SWING

Bill sits in a swing and plays a clarinet. The music flows out across the fields like a night breeze from the city. Abby, passing by, glowers at him, as though to ask if things are going along to his satisfaction.

95 ASTRONOMICAL SIGHTS (STOCK)

Jupiter, the Crab Nebula, the canals of Mars, etc.

CHUCK (o.s.)
It turns out that people might have built them. Does that surprise you?

ABBY (o.s.)
No.

96 EXT. RIDGE - DAWN

They are on a ridge opposite the Belvedere looking at the heavens through Chuck's telescope. Abby tingles with a sense of wonder. Chuck has opened a whole new world to her.

ABBY
You know so much! Would you bring my sister up here and tell her some of this stuff?

97 EXT. FATHER'S GRAVE - NIGHT

Nearby the grave of Chuck's father stands in helpless witness to Abby's deception. A cottonwood tree rises against the cold blue sky, still as a statue.

98 TIGHT ON BOOK - FLASHBACK

A hand turns the pages of a book from Chuck's childhood. The text and VOICE reading it are in Russian, the pictures of Russian wood folk and animals.

99 EXT. VIRGIN PRAIRIE - FLASHBACK

Chuck's father rushes around marking off his property with stakes.

100 EXT. UNFINISHED SOD HOUSE - FLASHBACK

Chuck, ten years old, scours up the blade of a scythe. Family effects -- a big green stove, a bird cage, a table stacked with melons and a mirror -- stand waiting in front of their half-finished sod house. We see no sign of Chuck's mother.

101 EXT. PLOWED FIELD - FLASHBACK

A plow folds back the earth. The roots of the prairie grass twang like harp strings.

The plowing done, his father sows the seed. Poverty requires that for a harrow he drag a tree branch in back of his ox. Over his shoulder he carries a rifle.

Chuck blows a horn to chase the blackbirds off the seed. A scarecrow is rigged to his back, to make him more intimidating.

102 CHUCK AND FATHER - FLASHBACK

Chuck's father has caught smallpox. His face is covered with sores. Chuck wants to embrace him, but the father wards him off with a long stick as he passes on some last instructions in Russian.

103 EXT. RIVER - FLASHBACK

The father stands on a ledge above the river, filling his pockets with rocks to weight him down.

CHUCK (V.O.)
My father caught smallpox when I was eleven. I fished him out of the river and buried him myself.

104 EXT. SAND BAR - FLASHBACK

Chuck drags his father's drowned body across a sand bar with a rope.

105 EXT. FATHER'S GRAVE - FLASHBACK

Chuck heaps the last bit of earth on his father's grave. The stove stands as a marker.

ABBY (o.s.)
So who raised you?

CHUCK (o.s.)
Nobody. Did it myself.

106 CHUCK AS BOY - WITH COYOTE, INDIANS - FLASHBACK

Famished, Chuck eats from the carcass of a coyote. Some INDIANS watch him from a ridge.

ABBY (o.s.)
From the time you were a kid? How?

CHUCK (o.s.)
Worked hard, didn't fool around. I never saw a city. Never had time. All I ever did is work.

He digs a post hole with a shovel twice his size.

107 PAN OVER HILLS - DAWN

The camera pans across Chuck's vast domain.

CHUCK (o.s.)
I gave my life to that land. But what do I really have now? It'll still be here when I'm gone. It won't remember me.
(pause)
I'd give it all up for you. I could make you happy, too, I think -- if only you'd trust me.

The camera settles on Ursula, playing with a dog on a seesaw Chuck has built her, then begins to move again, to a long shot of Chuck and Abby on the ridge by the telescope. Chuck is proposing.

108 EXT. DORM

Abby has told him of the proposal. Bill broods over an unlit cigarette. Is this a great blessing or a great misfortune which has befallen them?

X
START. ABBY- HE'S ASKED ME TO MARRY HIM.

BILL
I never really thought he would.
(pause)
What should we do?

ABBY
I thought you wanted to.

BILL
Before I did. You cold?

Abby is shivering. Bill takes off his jacket and slips it over her shoulders.

BILL
What're you thinking?

ABBY
We've never done anything like this.

BILL
Who'd know but you and me?

ABBY
Nobody.

BILL
That's it, Ab. That's all that matters, isn't it?

ABBY
You talk like it was all right. It would be a crime.

BILL
But to give him what he wants more than anything? Two, three months of sunshine? He'll never get to enjoy his money anyway. What're you talking about? We'd be showing him the first good times of his life.

ABBY
Maybe you're right.

At each hint of consent from Abby, Bill feels he must press on.

BILL
You know what they're going to stick on his tombstone? "Born like a fool, worked like a mule." Two lines.

Abby cannot say the proposal is devoid of principle. The idea of easing Chuck's imminent death gives them just the shade of a good motive. This would be a trade.

ABBY
What makes you think we're just talking about a couple of months?

BILL
Listen, the man's got one foot on a banana peel and the other on a roller skate. What can I say? We'll be gone before the President shows up.

He straightens his coat and smooths back his hair, to make her smile, without success.

BILL
Hey, I know how you feel. I feel just as bad. Like I was sticking an icepick in my heart. Makes me sick just to think about it!

ABBY
I held out a long time. I could've taken the first guy with a gold watch, but I held out.
(pause)
I told myself that when I found somebody, I'd stick by him.

BILL
I know. We're in quicksand, though. We stand around, it's going to suck us down like everybody else.
(pause)
Somewhere along the line you have to make a sacrifice. Lots of people want to sit back and take a piece without doing nothing.

He waits to see how she will respond. Half of him wants her to turn him down flat. Abby is bewildered.

ABBY
Have I ever complained? Have I said anything that would make you think...

BILL
You don't have to. I hate it when I see you stooped over and them looking at your ass like you were a whore. I personally feel ashamed! I want to take a .45 and let somebody have it.
(pause)
We got to look on the bright side of this, Ab. Year from today we got a Chinese butler and no shit from anybody.
(pause)
Some people need more'n they have, some have more'n they need. It's just a matter of getting us all together.
(pause)
I don't even know if I believe what I'm saying, though. I feel like we're on the edge of a big cliff.

Abby looks at the ground for a moment, then nods.

109 TIGHT ON CHUCK

Chuck lies in bed, daydreaming.

110 TIGHT ON ABBY AND URSULA

Ursula decorates Abby's hair with flowers and tells her how pretty she looks.

111 EXT. RIVER BANK

The wedding takes place along the river. The Preacher has come back with his ACOLYTES. A chest of drawers serves as the altar. Benson is the best man -- a joyless one. Ursula bounces around in a beautiful gown, looking for the first time like a young woman. The BAND practically outnumbers the guests: ELDERS from the local Mennonites, the MAYORS of a few surrounding towns decked out in sashes and medals, etc.

112 TIGHT ON ABBY AND BILL

Bill kisses the bride on the cheek. Each believes she is going through with this for the other's sake. They whisper back and forth.

ABBY
You know what this means, don't you?
(he nods)
We won't ever let each other down, will we?

BILL
I love you more than ever. I always will. I couldn't do this unless I loved you.

ABBY
I know. Nothing can ever put us apart.

113 SERIES OF ANGLES

The Acolytes ring an angelus bell. Chuck slips a sapphire on her finger. The Preacher, with outstretched arms, reminds them all that they are witness to a great event.

114 SKY - ABBY'S POV

Abby, frightened, looks off at the rolling sky, wondering how all this looks in the sight of heaven.

115 INT. BEDROOM - DUSK

From her pillow, Abby watches Chuck shyly enter the bedroom. He comes over and sits down beside her.

CHUCK
You're wonderful.

She is silent for a moment. The wind moans in the rafters

ABBY
No. But I wish I were.
(pause)
Listen. It sounds like the ocean.

They smile at each other.

116 EXT. BELVEDERE - DUSK

Bill watches the lights go out in the Belvedere. A lump rises to his throat. How exactly did this happen? He sets his jaw, vowing not to give way to weakness or jealousy. This is the price they have to pay for a lasting happiness.

117 TIGHT ON ABBY, CHUCK, ETC.

The next morning the newlyweds set off on their honeymoon. Chuck tells Bill to move his things from the dorm into the Belvedere.

Abby, a basket of cucumbers under her arm, waves goodbye, angling her wrist so that Bill and Ursula can see the diamond bracelet Chuck has given her.

118 EXT. PRAIRIE

They steer out across the prairie in a 1912 Overland auto. Ursula runs after them, slaps the back fender and hops around on one foot, pretending the other was run over. Abby laughs. She knows this stunt.

When they are gone Ursula turns fiercely on Bill.

URSULA
I hate you.

BILL
What for? Don't be any more of a pain in the neck than you gotta be, okay?

She swings at him with her fist. He pushes her away.

BILL
You think I like this? I'm doing it for her!

URSULA
You scum.

Bill slaps her.

BILL
Still think so?

She throws a rock at him and runs off. He catches her, repenting of his meanness.

BILL
I know you can't understand this, but there's nothing I want except good things for Abby and you. Go ahead and hit me back.

She hesitates a second, then slaps him as hard as she can. Blood glistens on his lip. He does not say a word in protest. She looks at the wound, horrified, then throws her arms tight around him.

119 EXT. PIER

Abby and Chuck disembark from a paddleboat steamer at a pier along the river. Chuck looks excited.

120 EXT. YELLOWSTONE POOL

Chuck and Abby have gone to Yellowstone Park for their honeymoon. Abby wades in a pool, wreathed by mists from the underworld. She carries a parasol to protect her from the sun. The trees in the vicinity are bare of leaves.

121 EXT. ANTLERS - FREEZE FRAME

Chuck kneels with a box camera to photograph a large pair of antlers lying on the ground.

122 SERIES OF STILLS (STOCK)

This photo becomes the first in a series from their Yellowstone trip: fishermen displaying sensational catches by a river, buggies vying with early autos on rutted roads, the giant Beaupre who stood eight feet tall, etc. Each of the pictures bears a caption. Together they make a little story.

ABBY (o.s.)
We saw grizzly bears and a boar.
The bears scared me the most.
They eat garbage.
(whispering)
I was so lonesome. I missed you.

123 TIGHT ON BILL AND ABBY

Bill and Abby kiss, renewing old ties.

ABBY
There was a mountain partly made of glass, too, but we didn't get to see it. And a petrified tree.

BILL
We'll go back.

ABBY
Can we? Because there's a whole lot I didn't get to see.

Bill straightens up. Chuck sits down on Abby's other side.

124 EXT. DINNER TABLE UNDER NET

They are having dinner on the lawn in front of the Belvedere. A fine mesh net is spread above them like a tent to keep the insects out. Ursula sits on Bill's lap. He puts a hand up the back of her shirt and they play as though she were a ventriloquist's dummy.

125 TIGHT ON RABBIT

Bill displays a rabbit which he trained in their absence to perform a card trick.

BILL (o.s.)
I have you now, Ed. Only thing that can beat me is the ace of spades. (His name's Ed.) Her name's Abigail. Hungarian name.
(mumbling)
Andrew drew Ann. Ann drew Andrew.

From the whole of a spread deck it picks the ace of spades.

126 NEW ANGLE

Abby and Chuck applaud. Ursula cranks up the victrola and puts on a record. Bill strokes the rabbit.

BILL
You know why I like him? He minds his business and isn't full of baloney.

Chuck turns to Abby and, for nearly the first time, smiles.

CHUCK
He's funny.

Bill holds a plate up for Abby to see. Limoges china. Abby rolls her eyes and spits out a cherry pit. They eat like pigs, with no respect for bourgeois manners.

URSULA
You have any talents, Chuck?

CHUCK
No, but I admire people who do.

ABBY
That's not so. He can do a duck. Show them.

BILL
Stand back. Get the women and children someplace safe.

Chuck, feeling it would be wrong not to enter the spirit of the occasion, does his imitation. The likeness is astonishing. Abby wipes a bit of food off his chin with her napkin. Bill drums on the table with his spoon.

ABBY
You saw how modest he was?

BILL
How'd you get along so long without a woman?

Chuck shrugs. Ursula makes a gesture as though to say by masturbating. Chuck does not see it. Billy laughs. Abby slaps her. The rabbit jumps out of the way.

ABBY
Don't you ever behave that way at table!
(to Chuck)
She's adopted. I had nothing to do with her upbringing. I'd trade her off for a yellow dog.
(to Ursula)
Now eat. You want to starve to death?

URSULA
That's what <u>you'd</u> like.

Abby, overcome with impatience, throws her food to the dogs. Ursula catches a grasshopper and holds it out to Chuck.

URSULA
You give me a quarter to eat this hopper?

Chuck does not reply. She pops it into her mouth anyway, enjoying his look of shock. Bill throws down his fork.

BILL
All right, okay, nobody's hungry anymore. What's the worst thing you ever did, Chuck? Besides missing church and that kind of stuff.

Chuck thinks about this.

CHUCK
Once I turned a man out in the middle of winter, without a cent of pay. For all I know he froze.

BILL
If you went that far, he must've deserved it. What else?

CHUCK
He didn't. I fired him out of resentment.

BILL
Well, you're the boss, right? That's how it works. You've got to make decisions on the spot. Anyway, this guy -- what's his name? -- if I know the type, which I do, he's probably doing okay for himself, got a hand in somebody else's pocket for a change. Is that all?

CHUCK
All I can think of right now. How about yourself?

BILL
(to Abby)
He wants to know. I'm not going to count setting Blackie's on fire either. He had it coming.

(MORE)

BILL (CONT'D)
(pause)
Once I punched a guy while he was asleep.

Chuck looks surprised. Bill glances at Abby, worried that he might have said too much.

BILL
I was just kidding. Actually a guy I know did, though.

ABBY
Maybe he did it to you.

BILL
Yeah. I think so.

Chuck gets up to ring for Miss Carter. Bill looks him up and down. Chuck, though older, is physically more imposing.

URSULA
Can I have the rabbit?

BILL
Get serious. I can win money with him.

She licks his ear. He laughs.

URSULA
I want that bunny.

BILL
You still believe in Santa Claus.

Bill closes his eyes as he feels the soft fur of the rabbit. Ursula looks around to make sure Chuck is gone, then wings a roll at Bill. It bounces off his forehead. He retaliates with a pat of butter.

127 BENSON

Benson watches from another hill. He finds his displacement by these newcomers a humiliating injustice.

128 NEW ANGLE

Chuck returns to the table and draws Bill aside.

CHUCK
Almost forgot. Here's your pay.

Bill takes the envelope Chuck holds out. Then, in a spasm of conscience, he gives it back.

CHUCK
What's the matter?

BILL
I got no right to.

CHUCK
Why?

Bill is momentarily at a loss for words.

BILL
I haven't worked hard enough to deserve it. I been goofing off.

CHUCK
Don't be silly.

BILL
Give it to charity or something.
(pause)
Don't worry. I always know to look out for myself, because if I don't, who will? See what I'm driving at?

Chuck sees a sense of honor at work in Bill here, and though he considers the gesture misguided and a little grand, admires him for it.

129 EXT. BASES

They play a game with big lace pillows for bases. The rules are unintelligible.

130 NEW ANGLE

Bill is expert at throwing knives. As the others watch, he goes into a big windup and pins a playing card to the side of the house.

Everyone seems happy and congenial. They have reached some kind of plateau. Chuck's ignorance of the ruse does not cause the others to treat him with less respect. They seem themselves almost to have forgotten it.

131 BILL AND ABBY'S POV - LATER

Benson collects the bases, a job he doubtless feels is beneath him.

The Doctor's wagon, unmistakable even at such a great distance, thunders away from the Belvedere.

132 TIGHT ON BILL AND ABBY

Bill and Abby, waiting for Chuck to join them for a swim, look questioningly at each other.

133 EXT. RIVER

Ursula, in her bathing suit, jumps from a ledge above the river. She holds a big umbrella over her to see if it will act as a parachute.

Bill and Chuck have a water fight. Abby wades in the shallows with a parasol.

134 TIGHT ON ABBY AND URSULA - LATER

Abby is teaching Ursula how to kiss.

ABBY
Too like a mule.

URSULA
(trying again)
What about that?

ABBY
It's got to be -- how should I say? -- more relaxed.

They laugh and kiss again.

135 NEW ANGLE

Farther up the slope Bill and Chuck wring out their bathing suits. Bill, thinking of the Doctor's visit, puts a hand on Chuck's shoulder. This time Chuck does not stiffen or ease it off.

BILL
You okay?

CHUCK
Sure. Why?

Bill shrugs, beaming with admiration for this man who does not burden others with his secrets.

BILL
I appreciate everything you've done for Abby. I really do. You've given her all the things she always deserved. I got to admit you have.

Chuck looks off, embarrassed but oddly pleased. Bill snatches up a handful of weeds and smells them.

136 CRANE SHOT

Returning home they portray the movements of the sun, earth and moon relative to each other. Abby is the sun and keeps up a steady pace across the prairie.

Chuck, the earth, circles her at a trot, giving instructions. Bill, with the most strenuous role of all -- the moon -- runs around Chuck while he circles Abby.

137 EXT. PRAIRIE - SERIES OF ANGLES

They play golf on the infinite fairway of the prairie. Bill and Abby make a team against Chuck and Ursula. Nightingales call out like mermaids from the sea.

BILL
You liking it here?
(she nods)
Feel good?
(she nods)
Feels good to feel good.

He smiles, satisfied that he has done well by her, and lets a new ball slip down his pant leg to replace the one he played.

138 NEW ANGLE

Ursula, meanwhile, grinds Abby's ball into the dirt with the heel of her boot. She winks at Chuck. Chuck smiles back.

CHUCK
What's your mother like?

URSULA
Her? Like somebody that just got hit on the head. She used to pray for me. Rosary, the stations, everything. "Hey, Ma," I tell her, "I ain't crippled." They don't know, though. They say you're in trouble. They don't know.
(pause)
My dad, the same way. Thought the world owed him a living. He drowned in Lake Michigan.

139 EXT. BELVEDERE

They walk home. Bill stays behind to work on his strokes. Ursula sends the dogs after the balls.

BILL
You shag them, not those dogs. They might choke or run off with them.

URSULA
Who made you the boss? Shag them yourself.

BILL
Listen, some day all this is going to be mine. Or half is. Somebody like that, you want to get on his good side, not give him a lot of gas. You want to do what he says.

He steps off a few paces of his future kingdom and draws a deep breath.

BILL
This reminds me of where I came from. I left when I was six. That's when I met your sister.

He looks at the land with a new sense of reverence. He snatches up a handful of grass and rolls it between his palms.

BILL
I can't wait to go back to Chicago, bring them down for a visit. Blackie and them. There's a lot of satisfaction in showing up people who thought you'd never amount to anything.
(pause)
I'd really like to see this place run right. I got a lot of ideas I'd like to try out.

140 BILL'S POV AND TIGHT ON BILL

In the distance he sees Chuck put his arm on Abby's waist and whisper something in her ear. This intimacy rubs him the wrong way. He gives his clubs to Ursula and starts after them.

141 INT. KITCHEN

Bill finds them in the kitchen. Chuck goes into the other room to look for something. Abby lifts the cigarette out of Bill's mouth, takes a drag and does a French inhale. Bill kisses her.

ABBY
Nobody's all bad, are they?

BILL
I met a few I was wrong on, then.

Suddenly they hear Chuck's footsteps. They pull back just in time, Abby returning the cigarette to him behind her back. They chat as though nothing had happened.

BILL
I have a headache. I probably should've worn a hat.

Abby rolls her eyes at this improvisation. No sooner does Chuck turn his back than Bill's hand darts out to touch her breast. He snatches it away a moment before Chuck turns back.

Together they walk into the living room.

BILL
You ever see anybody out here?

CHUCK
Not after harvest.

BILL
How often do you get into town?

CHUCK
Once or twice a year.

BILL
You're kidding. He must be kidding.

CHUCK
Why do I need to?

Bill catches Abby's eyes. He frowns at the idea of being cooped up with this Mormon all winter.

BILL
Relaxation. Look at the girls. Opportunity to see how other folks live.

Chuck looks at him blankly. None of these reasons seems to carry much weight for him. Bill turns to Abby.

BILL
Somebody is nuts. I don't know whether it's him or me, but somebody is definitely nuts.

ABBY
Why don't I fix tea?

BILL
Maybe I should help you.

He follows her back into the kitchen, where he starts to kiss her. She pushes him away and turns to making the tea.

ABBY
You're worse than an Airedale.
(raising her voice)
You want jasmine or mint?

CHUCK (o.s.)
Mint.

Bill lifts up the back of her dress and looks under it, testing the breadth of his license. She slaps it back down. He lifts it again, standing on his right to. She glowers at him.

ABBY
Don't do that.
(calling to Chuck)
How much sugar?

BILL
Why not? I'm just seeing what kind of material it's made of.

CHUCK (o.s.)
One spoonful.

Bill walks around absentmindedly, inspecting Chuck's things, stealing whatever catches his fancy. A book, a paperweight, a bell -- things he does not really want and has no use for. His conscience is clear, however; the sacrifices they are making excuse these little sins.

As Chuck walks in, Bill has pocketed a candlestick.

ABBY
Where's the candlestick?

Chuck shrugs. Bill gives Abby a cold look and goes outside.

CHUCK
He's a strange one.

ABBY
(nodding)
Once he named his shoes like they were pets. It was a joke, I guess.

142 EXT. WELL

Bill drops the candlestick down the well, stands for a moment, then punches the bucket with his fist. He looks up. Benson has seen him.

143 EXT. SAPLINGS AGAINST WINDOW - NIGHT

Outside the saplings thrash in the wind.

144 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Abby wakes up with a gasp.

CHUCK
What's the matter?

ABBY
I had a dream.

CHUCK
What about?
(pause)
Was something after you?

ABBY
I forgot it already.

145 AERIAL SHOT (STOCK)

The camera falls through the clouds as though in a lost fragment of Abby's dreams.

146 EXT. BARN

Benson sulks by the barn. Chuck approaches him.

CHUCK
You come down here a lot, don't you? Always when you're mad. You never change.

BENSON
It might not be my place to say this, sir, but I don't think they're honest people.

CHUCK
He gets on your nerves, doesn't he? He always has.
(cutting in)
Now don't say something you're going to regret.

BENSON
Why should I regret it? I think they're a pair of scam artists, sir. Let me tell you what I've seen, and you judge for yourself.

Chuck, who of course has seen the same things and more, raises a hand to silence him.

CHUCK
Maybe you'd be happier taking over the north end till spring. I don't say this in anger. We've been together a long time, and I've always felt about you like, well, close. It just might work out better is all. Less friction.

BENSON
Don't believe me, then. You shouldn't. But why not check it out, sir? Hire a detective in Chicago. It won't cost much. What's there to lose?

Chuck's brow darkens as Benson goes on. For a moment we glimpse the anger that would be unleashed if ever he woke up. Somewhere he already knows the truth but refuses to acknowledge it.

CHUCK
You're talking about my wife.

And so Chuck, too, becomes an accomplice in the scheme.

BENSON
Maybe I better pack my things.

Benson turns and walks off. Chuck watches him go, ashamed of himself. What has this man done but a friend's duty?

147 INT. MASTER BEDROOM

Abby sits at the dresser in the master bedroom. Bill walks in through the door and tries Chuck's hat on for size.

ABBY
What're you doing in here?

BILL
Just walked in through the door, like any other white man.

On the bureau he finds a pistol. He aims it out the window. All this will soon be theirs!

BILL
Smith and Wesson. You ought to see one of these plow into a watermelon.

She holds a hairbrush out for him to see. He looks it over and gives it back without comment. He finds a stain on the tabletop.

BILL
Somebody's been staining this fake inlay with a water glass. Actually I don't blame them.

He walks around trying out more of Chuck's appurtenances. Abby, caught up, models a shawl before an imaginary mirror. She blows a kiss at herself.

ABBY
Don't say I did that.

BILL
The bed should be over next to the window. Where the view is.

Bill is already making plans for life after Chuck's demise.

BILL
Maybe we build on a balcony.
(pause)
First the birds go.

The peacocks are crowing outside. They burst out laughing. Bill checks the mussed bedsheets.

ABBY
That doesn't concern you.

BILL
Why not?
(no reply)
Look, I know you've got urges. It wouldn't be right if you didn't.

Abby stands up, angry.

ABBY
You think I enjoy it?

BILL
Lower your voice.

ABBY
You act like it's harder on you than me! I never want to talk about this again.

Bill, consoled, holds an eyelet blouse against the light.

BILL
I bet he enjoys looking at you in this.

ABBY
I thought you liked it.

BILL
He likes it, too, is what I'm saying.

ABBY
Well, it's the style.

BILL
I see.

ABBY
What do you want me to wear in this heat? A blanket?

BILL
That's your problem.

Abby puts on her wedding bracelet and admires it. Bill softens at the sight of her beauty, properly adorned.

BILL
I told you someday we'd be living in style. When this whole thing is over I'm going to buy you a necklace with diamonds as big as that.

He holds out the tip of his little finger. They laugh, as though they suddenly felt the absurdity of all this make-believe.

BILL
You're cute. Maybe a shade <u>too</u> cute.

She touches his face sympathetically, as though to say that she knows the pain this was causing him.

ABBY
This is terrible for us both.

CHUCK (o.s.)
Abby?

They jump as Chuck calls up from downstairs.

ABBY
Down in a minute.

She kisses Bill.

148 EXT. BACK DOOR OF BELVEDERE

Bill sneaks out the back door of the Belvedere, only to find Benson drinking at the well. They look at each other in silence for a moment. Benson's horse stands beside him, a suitcase fixed to the saddle.

BENSON
I know what you're doing.

BILL
What're you talking about?

BENSON
That boy's like a son to me. Don't you forget it. I know what you're doing.

Benson gets on his horse, turns and rides off. Miss Carter waves goodbye from the side of the house. She and Bill exchange a look.

149 EXT. FRONT PORCH

Bill finds the others around front. Abby lolls in the hammock writing in her diary and eating a peach. Ursula plays the guitar.

Little by little the newcomers have done the house over from the austere structure that it was. Living room furniture has been moved out onto the front lawn and there arranged as though by a child. Goats sleep on the divan. Archery targets hang from the side of the house. The porch is covered with a striped awning, bird cages and twirls of bunting. Everywhere an atmosphere of drunken ease prevails.

BILL
Nice fall day.

URSULA
Wish I'd said that.

BILL
(to Abby)
Watcha doing?

ABBY
Eating a green peach. 'Spect to die any minute.

BILL
Listen, I had a great idea. Let's spend Christmas in Chicago. Break up the old routine. Rhino's never been to a baseball game or a horse race. I know guys one month off the boat that have. Don't even speak the English language, but they eat it right up.
(pause)
You're just a young guy, Rhino: You oughta be running around raising hell. No offense to the little woman.

He bows apologetically to Abby. She pinches a dead leaf off a plant.

CHUCK
Abby says that in the poor section people eat cats.

BILL
Did you, sis? Well, there's always something doing. I can't begin to tell you. State and Madison? Mmmm. Lights everywhere. You'd love it.

CHUCK
It can be rough, though.

BILL
Rough? Listen, you can't walk down the street without somebody reaching in your pocket! You've got to keep your coat like this and poke them away.

ABBY
Bill got shot once. The bullet's still in him.

CHUCK
Really?

BILL
Doctor said he took it out, but I never saw it. Hurt like a bastard. You got no idea how it hurt.

Suddenly he worries this might discourage Chuck from going.

BILL
They won't mess with you, though. Big fella like you. I can see it now.

He offers a taste of the talk Chuck is like to provoke on the street corners.

BILL
"Hey, hey, hey. Who's this here, fresh out of the African jungle, moving down the sidewalk with a whowhowho, taking ten feet at a step and making all the virgins run for cover? Why, it's Big Rhino, the King of Beasts. He walks, he talks, he sucks up chalk."

Bill steps back and sees, as though for the first time, how imposing Chuck really is.

BILL
You are big, aren't you? Sunny Jim! You must've had a real moose for an old lady.

ABBY
Take it easy.

But Chuck holds none of this against him. He knows it comes from respect.

BILL
So what do you say?
(pause)
What a sorry outfit! Bunch of old ladies. You better stay behind. Your mammas'd probably get upset. But when the time comes, I'm out of here. Hit the road, Toad!

Ursula passes the sandwiches around until there is just one left, Miss Carter's. While the others are talking, she scoops up a handful of dirt and pours it into the middle.

Bill, lighting a cigarette, notices Chuck's hand on Abby's.

BILL
Ever seen a match burn twice?

CHUCK
No.

Bill blows out the match and touches Chuck's hand with the hot ember, causing him to yank it away.

BILL
That's old.

Chuck starts to cough. Bill looks at Abby, then whips the handkerchief out of his pocket and puts it over his nose, as though to keep from getting Chuck's germs.

Miss Carter's face goes blank as she bites into her sandwich.

She jumps up and rushes back into the house. Chuck frowns.

Bill glares at Ursula, then turns to Chuck and, referring to the dead prairie grass which runs through the front yard right up to the house, continues:

BILL
You ever thought of putting in some fescue here? Some fescue grass? Of course, it might not take in this soil.

Chuck stands up and winds a stole, a long religious scarf, around his neck.

CHUCK
You ready?

BILL
I still have a little of this sore throat. Where you going, though?

CHUCK
To kill a hog.

BILL
What's the necktie for?
(pause)
Or does it just come in handy?

CHUCK
Keeps the stain of guilt off.

Chuck nods goodbye and walks off, taking a stool with him. Bill sighs with admiration.

BILL
I try and try.

ABBY
What a splendid person! I've never met anybody like him!

BILL
Splendid people make you nervous.

ABBY
They do! I breathe a sigh of relief when they step outside the room.

Bill puts on his boater and opens a copy of the Police Gazette. They are silent for a moment.

BILL
A guy ate a brick on a bet. Must of busted it up first with a hammer. Guy in New York City. Where else?
(jumping up)
Anybody want to bet me I can't stick this knife in that post?

Nobody takes him up on this. Abby leafs through the Sears catalogue, her mind dancing with visions of splendor.

150 TIGHT ON CATALOGUE

Pictured in the catalogue are bath oils and corsets and feathered hats. A grasshopper is perched on the page among them, its eyes blank and dumb.

151 TIGHT ON ROSE

Bill watches her run her finger slowly around the closed heart of a rose. Suddenly they both look at each other. They have heard the squeals, faint but unmistakable, of a hog being led to slaughter.

152 TIGHT ON STOOL - QUICK CUT

Chuck has tied the hog's feet to the inverted legs of the stool.

153 OTHER QUICK CUTS

Ursula, off by herself, skips rope.

A flag on the pole by the front gate snaps in the breeze.

From the branch of a lone tree the hog dangles by its hocks into the mouth of a barrel.

154 EXT. BELVEDERE - ABBY'S POV FROM SECOND FLOOR WINDOW

Miss Carter storms down the hill with her bags. Fed up, she is leaving the bonanza. Chuck tries in vain to appease her. She keeps walking, out the front gate and into the prairie on a straight course for the railroad tracks.

Chuck will now be alone at the Belvedere with the newcomers and no other point of reference.

155 EXT. CLOTHES LINE

Later that afternoon, Bill catches sight of Abby's underthings rustling on the clothes line.

156 INT. STAIRS

That evening he watches her from behind as she climbs the stairs to join Chuck at their bedroom door. She nods goodnight, sensing the jealousy that is growing in him.

157 INT. MASTER BEDROOM

Chuck looks impatiently through a drawer.

CHUCK
I can't find anything around here. Last week it was my gloves; this week my talc. What's going on?

He stands and watches Abby get ready for bed. She fills him with a deep adoration. He feels that in the tulip of her mouth at last he has found heaven.

CHUCK
You're beautiful.

ABBY
You don't think my skin's too fair?

He comes up behind her and touches her long hair.

CHUCK
You're smart, too, aren't you?

ABBY
I know what the Magna Carta is.

CHUCK
Can I help you brush it out?

ABBY
Not right now.

She is cold to discourage false expectations in him -- and because she feels that she at least owes Bill this. Chuck, however, assumes the fault must be his own. His naivete about women, and the world in general, protects the conspirators -- and protects him, too, for he glimpses enough of the truth not to want to know any more.

CHUCK
What makes you so distant with me?

ABBY
Distant? I don't mean to be.

CHUCK
You know what I'm talking about, though. You aren't that way with your brother.

158 INT. ATTIC

Bill, eavesdropping in the attic above them, surveys Chuck's dusty heirlooms.

CHUCK (o.s.)
It must be something I'm doing. I wish you'd tell me what, though.

159 INT. BEDROOM

These gentle endearments, so rarely heard from Bill, stir her deeply. She throws herself in his arms.

ABBY
Oh, Chuck! Please forgive me. Does it mean anything that I'm sorry?

CHUCK
(pleased)
But I don't blame you. Did I make it sound that way?

ABBY
You should. You have a right to.

CHUCK
It's just that sometimes I feel I don't know you well.

ABBY
You don't. It's true.

CHUCK
I think you love me better than before, though.

She rubs her cheek against his hands. Daily she feels warmer toward him. How much of this is love, how much respect or devotion, even she cannot say.

160 TIGHT ON BILL - LATER - NIGHT

The night throbs with crickets. Bill cracks open the bedroom door. Chuck lies asleep in a shaft of moonlight next to Abby. He hesitates a moment, but a strange compulsion drives him on. He has never done anything so dangerous, or had so little idea why.

161 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Abby wakes up to find him staring her in the face. He kisses her. Chuck stirs. Abby signals they should go outside.

162 EXT. BELVEDERE - DAY FOR NIGHT

They sneak out of the Belvedere. The night is warm.

ABBY
You're no good.

BILL
Mmmm. But I love you.

ABBY
I can't stand it any more. This is just so cruel. We're both no good. I've got to get drunk with you, Bill. You know what I mean? Drunk.

Bill wags a bottle. The dogs, awakened, bay from the kennel. They wait a moment to see if a light will go on in the house, then dart off toward the fields. A plaster lawn dwarf seems to watch them go.

163 EXT. FIELDS - DAY FOR NIGHT

They run through the fields, hand in hand, laughing and flirting. The moon makes Abby's nightgown a ghostly white.

ABBY
We can never do this again, though. Okay? It really is too dangerous.

BILL
This one night.

He toes a sodden old shoe.

BILL
Hey, I found a shoe.

164 SHOE, COYOTES, SCARECROW - DAY FOR NIGHT

The shoe gleams in the moonlight. Coyotes yelp from the hilltops. A scarecrow spreads its arms against the sky. The waving fields of wheat have given way to vast reaches of cleanly shaven stubble, stained with purple morning glories. Odd, large stakes are planted among them.

165 NEW ANGLE - DAY FOR NIGHT

BILL
You want me to spin you around?

She nods okay. He takes her by the hands and spins her around the way he used to -- until they go reeling off, too dizzy to stand.

166 EXT. RIVER BANK - DAY FOR NIGHT

They lie by the river looking at the great dome of stars. Bill wants to believe things are the same between them as before. So does Abby -- but she knows better.

BILL
Suppose we woke up tomorrow and it was a thousand years ago. I mean, with all we know? Electricity, the telephone, radio, that kind of stuff. They'd never figure out how we came up with it all. Maybe they'd kill us.

She looks at him, and they laugh.

BILL
You sleepy?

ABBY
This is the first time we slept together in a while, Bill.

BILL
You like it?

ABBY
Of course.

BILL
Kiss me, then.

ABBY
It's so sweet to be able to kiss you when I want to.

167 NEW ANGLE

Before the marriage his lovemaking was gentle and soft. Now it has a brutal air, as though he were asserting his right to her for the last time.

168 TIGHT ON ABBY - DAWN

Dawn is breaking. Abby jumps to her feet, alarmed. They have slept too long.

169 EXT. BELVEDERE - DAWN

They have run back to the Belvedere. It seems they are safe until Chuck appears on the porch, yawning and stretching. Bill drops to the ground while Abby goes ahead.

Abby appears at one side of the house while Bill steals around the other. Luckily, they have come up from the back.

CHUCK
Abby! I've been looking all over for you. Where have you been?

While she distracts Chuck, Bill slips back in the house. It has been a close call.

ABBY
Watching the ducks.

CHUCK
Didn't you sleep well?

ABBY
No.

170 TIGHT ON ABBY (DISSOLVE TO PAGE, THEN TO URSULA)

Abby looks sympathetically at Chuck. Her face dissolves into a page of her diary and from there to Ursula, balancing an egg on her fingertip.

ABBY (o.s.)
Chuck saw Ursula balance an egg. He begged her to repeat this trick, but she wouldn't.

171 TIGHT ON CHUCK

Chuck tries to reduplicate Ursula's feat. Abby, amused, reaches out and touches his face.

We wonder if, despite herself, she might be falling in love with him.

172 EXT. BELVEDERE

Bill watches the Doctor walk out the front door and down the steps to his wagon. Chuck follows, smiling.

ABBY (o.s.)
The Doctor came. Chuck looked pleased for a change.

173 EXT. PRAIRIE - BILL'S POV

The Doctor's wagon rolls off across the prairie.

ABBY (o.s.)
Tomorrow the President passes through. Plans have changed, and he can't stop.

174 EXT. RAILROAD TRACKS - DUSK

They have come down to the railroad tracks to watch the President pass through.

URSULA
We should have brought a flag.

ABBY
Does she have time to ride back and get it?

Abby and Bill hold hands. Chuck by now is accustomed to such displays. They seem, however, to make Abby increasingly uncomfortable.

175 MOVING TRAIN - THEIR POVS

The train bursts past at twenty yards, its great light rolling like a lunatic eye. Bill's heart pounds with excitement. Chuck holds Abby by the waist. Ursula waves a handkerchief... They cannot make out anything specific in the windows, but there is the sense of people going more important places, getting on with the serious business of their lives — while out here they stagnate.

Dimly visible, on the back platform of the caboose, a MAN in a frock coat salutes them with his cane.

The train has quickly vanished into the declining sun. Everything is quiet again. Ursula rushes up the grade to collect some pennies she laid on the tracks.

ABBY
Did you see him wave?

CHUCK
He was shorter than I expected.

BILL
How do you know it was him?

ABBY
I saw! He had a hat on.

BILL
You didn't understand my question.

They walk back to the buggy. Ursula holds up a dead snake she found on the tracks.

URSULA
You know what I'm going to do with this? Take it home and put it in vinegar.

BILL
That was the President, shortie. Wake up.

Bill watches Chuck help Abby into the buggy. She is laughing about something or other. His hand lingers for a moment on hers. She does not brush it aside, as once she might have, but to Bill's dismay, presses it against her breast. Chuck seems to have breathed a hope into her that he, Bill, was never able to.

176 EXT. FIELDS

Abby and Ursula race across the fields trying to fly a kite. Ursula rides a tiny Shetland pony. Just as the wind lifts the kite away, they run into Bill. He sits by himself observing a spear of grass. Abby drops off. Ursula rides off over the hill with the kite, leaving her alone with Bill.

START

ABBY
You look deep in thought.

She touches his cheek. He brushes her hand away.

ABBY
What's the matter?

BILL
Nothing..

ABBY
There's nothing wrong?

BILL
No.

ABBY
What're you so mad about then?

BILL
Who said I was mad?

ABBY
Nobody.

BILL
Can't I be alone once in a while without everybody getting all worked up?

ABBY
You're the only person getting worked up.

Some buffalo appear on the crest of the next hill. Abby looks at them. They do not seem quite part of this world but mythical, like minotaurs.

ABBY
Chuck says they're good for the grass.
(pause)
Stop giving me that look.

BILL
You can't keep your hands off him these days.

ABBY
What're you talking about?

BILL
You know.

ABBY
I haven't touched him.

BILL
How about the other night? I saw you, Abby. The other night by the tracks? If only you wouldn't lie! Really, there's some things about you I'm never going to understand.

ABBY
I forgot. Anyway it doesn't matter. What are you doing, always trying to trap me?

Bill paces around, disgusted with himself and the whole situation.

BILL
I can't stand it any more. It's just too degrading.
(pause)
You and him. Why do I have to spell it out? I thought it would be all over in a month or two. Guy might go another five years. We've got to clear out, Abby. You need to get a divorce.

They stare at each other in silence for a moment.

ABBY
Why stop now?
(pause)
We've come this far.

BILL
What?

ABBY
You heard me.

BILL
Why stay? Go ahead and tell me! I'm standing here.

Bill trembles with shock and anger. The buffalo cast aware glances at them.

ABBY
You want us to lose everything?

BILL
I'm telling you I can't stand it.

ABBY
You're weak then. What about all I've been through?
(pause)
And what about <u>him</u>? It would be the worst thing we could do. Worse than anything so far. It would break his heart.

Bill is silent for a moment.

BILL
You're getting to like him, aren't you?

ABBY
It would kill him. Leaving now would be just cruel.

BILL
Would it? So what's it matter to somebody in his shape?
(pause)
In fact you're just leaving us one way out.

ABBY
What're you talking about?

SILL

You will not see!

Murdering him? Ursula comes riding over the hill, without the kite.

BILL
You watch and see.

STOP

URSULA
I had to let it go. One of them started following me, and I threw a rock at him. I had a bunch stored in my pocket.

They take off running after her.

177 EXT. BELVEDERE

As they approach the Belvedere, Bill sees Chuck standing on the front steps. Suddenly angry, he draws Abby to him and in plain view kisses her on the lips.

ABBY
He can see you!

Bill nods; he knows. Abby runs ahead, angry and alarmed.

BILL
Don't you believe in being honest?

178 NEW ANGLE

Abby bounds up the steps. Chuck has bent his mind to understand all this as mere sibling love, but here is the greatest test so far.

ABBY
Aren't you going to kiss me?

CHUCK
Why?

ABBY
Today's my birthday.

Chuck gives her a kiss, glad to put aside his suspicions.

179 TIGHT ON POINTERS, QUAIL AND PHEASANTS

Tails level, their noses thrust high in the air, a pair of pointers prance through the high uplands grass, following a scent like sailors taking in a rope. Pheasants and quail tremble in their coveys, their eyes big with fear.

180 EXT. UPLANDS

Chuck has taken Bill out bird-hunting. They wear heavy canvas leggings and carry shotguns.

BILL
Did you ever tell Abby the buffalo help keep up the grass?

CHUCK
I think so. Why?

Bill shrugs. Chuck welcomes this opportunity to speak of his wife. He considers Bill a good friend, in fact the only person with whom he can talk about delicate matters.

CHUCK
I want to get her something nice for Christmas.

Bill, who means to kill Chuck the first chance he gets, forgets this intention for a moment to give him advice.

BILL
(thoughtfully)
She likes to draw. Maybe some paints. Nothing too expensive -- she might want to exchange it. Maybe a coat. She likes to show off sometimes. She's sweet that way.

CHUCK
I wish I knew how to make her happy. Nothing I do really seems to.

BILL
That's how they are. They like to make you work for it. I couldn't ever figure out why.
(pause)
Sometimes you can't go wrong, though. You know that one Abby showed you a picture of? Elizabeth? I took her cherry.

CHUCK
I know. You told me.

BILL
Actually, I didn't, but I could have. The point I'm making is you've got to understand how they operate. Get them thinking you can take it or leave it, you're usually okay.

Suddenly the dogs stop rigid, on point. At Chuck's hiss they sink into the grass.

Bill locks at Chuck's exposed back. Nobody would know. It could be made to seem like a hunting accident. He cocks the hammers of his shotgun. His heart pounds wildly. Chuck talks in a low voice to the dogs.

CHUCK (o.s.)
All right, put them up, girl.

The dogs rise and inch toward the birds, as slowly as the minute hand of a clock. All at once the quail explode out of hiding. Bill jumps at the noise. Chuck fires twice. Two birds fall. The retriever notes where. Chuck turns around.

CHUCK
Why aren't you shooting? I left you those two on the left.

BILL
They caught me off guard.

CHUCK
You have to keep your gun up.

Chuck walks ahead. The music builds a mood of tension. Bill takes a practice shot into the ground. Bill looks around. There is nobody in sight. He turns the sights on Chuck's back. It would be simple enough.

Though only twenty feet away, he closes the gap, to make sure he does not miss.

Chuck whistles the scattered birds back to their covey. "Pheo! Pheo!" Soon, faint and far away, comes a reply -- the sweet, pathetic whistle of the quail lost in a forest of grass. The mother bird utters a low "all is well." One by one, near and far, the note is taken up, and they begin to return.

Bill holds his breath. His finger moves inside the trigger guard. He only has to squeeze a fraction of an inch. Three more birds shoot out of the grass. Chuck fires. At first we think Bill has, but he cannot stoop this low. He does not have the heart. Disgusted, he throws his gun on the ground. Both barrels go off. Chuck snaps around, startled and concerned. Bill is shaking like a leaf.

CHUCK
What's the matter? What are you so upset about?

BILL
They surprised me again.

Chuck sends a retriever after the fallen birds, then -- in an unprecedented gesture -- puts his arm over Bill's shoulder to comfort him, like an older brother.

181 NEW ANGLE

They return home, the day's kill slung over the back of a Shetland pony.

182 EXT. BACK YARD

They sit on stools in the back yard plucking the birds.

BILL
You like to box?

CHUCK
I never have.

BILL
Just wondering. I got a pair of gloves I brought with me.

Bill feels oddly better, as though Chuck had backed down.

CHUCK
Abby bought me this at Yellowstone.

Chuck shows Bill his knife. Bill reads a name off the handle.

BILL
That's what she calls you? 'Chickie?'

He gets up, his nostrils flaring with anger. Chuck thinks this indignance is on his behalf.

CHUCK
Doesn't bother me. Should it?

Bill throws down the pheasant he was plucking.

CHUCK
What's the matter.

BILL
Don't let her fool you, too. She warms up to whoever says please and thank you.

CHUCK
What's the matter?

Bill, still angry at himself, considers telling him.

BILL
You really want to know?

He would like Chuck to know the truth but does not want the responsibility for revealing it. He must find out by accident.

Luckily they are interrupted as Ursula runs up, pointing over her shoulder. A pair of three-wing airplanes sputters into view low overhead. One seems to be having engine trouble.

183 EXT. FIELD NEAR BELVEDERE

The planes set down in a nearby field. "Toto's Flying Circus" is emblazoned on the wings.

184 NEW ANGLE

Five PEOPLE clamber out, members of a seedy vaudeville troupe. They swagger around, filthy with oil from the backwash of the props, looking more like convicts than entertainers. Their LEADER is an excitable Levantine.

LEADER
How long it take to fix? Very mooch time! Now look where you hab stuck us. Salaupe! You forget who I aim!

Bill, Abby and Ursula approach the aircraft with the greatest caution, like the Indians at Cortez's ships.

185 EXT. SCREEN - NIGHT

A JUGGLER and a SNAKE CHARMER perform first separately, then jointly as a slap act. A DOUBLE TALKER weaves sentences of absolute nonsense. After a moment a black and white image appears over his face and he drops out of sight.

The troupe is putting on a show to earn its supper. ONE of them stands behind the viewers -- Abby and Bill, Chuck and Ursula -- cranking a carbide projector by hand. A silent movie appears on the screen, full of extraordinary pratfalls, disappearances and other tricks of the early cinema. Chuck has never seen anything remotely like this.

CHUCK (o.s.)
How'd they do that? Where'd he go? There must be a wire. Etc.

He steps forward to inspect the screen, actually just a sheet hung along a clothesline, to see whether the image is coming from behind. Bill and Abby sit rapt as children, nostalgic for Chicago.

186 EXT. DINNER TABLE - NIGHT

Ursula serves dinner. She is excited by the visitors' city ways. They are bored with her, all except the youngest, GEORGE, a young pilot in a white scarf.

URSULA
We never hear a thing out here. It's like being on a boat in the middle of a lake. You see things going on, but way far away, with no voices.

GEORGE
Maybe time to clear out.

George puts his hand on hers. She snatches it away.

GEORGE
What's the matter? Aren't I your type or something?

The Doubletalker pokes his fork into a pudding. A balloon, concealed beneath the surface, explodes to general delight. Down the table Abby and Bill chat with the Leader.

LEADER
You do not understand, sir. I am saddled with asses, yaays? I, who once played the Albert Hall!

BILL
You hear that? He called me 'sir.'

In their gaiety he carelessly puts a hand on Abby's leg.

187 TIGHT ON CHUCK - NIGHT

Chuck looks on from the shadows, no longer just puzzled but angry. He has watched them behave this way a dozen times before, but tonight, with other people around, he must see it more directly.

188 EXT. STRAW STACK - NIGHT

George tells Ursula a joke. She dissolves in giggles before he can finish, as though amazed at his power to dispense illusion.

189 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Chuck, alone in the darkened living room, calms himself down by breathing through a rubber mask into a respirator. Joyful noises reach him from outside.

190 CHUCK'S POV - NEXT MORNING

The next morning Chuck looks down out his bedroom window. The troupe is packing to leave. Still troubled, he walks to the bed and stands over Abby.

CHUCK
What's going on, Abby?

She does not respond. He yanks the sheet off. She is wearing a nightgown. She looks up and frowns. This is the first time she has ever seen him this way.

CHUCK
You know what I mean. Between you and Bill.

ABBY
I have no idea...

CHUCK
(interrupting)
Something's not right, and I want to know what.

Abby jumps out of bed and assumes the offensive. She has no other choice.

ABBY
Say it out loud. What're you worried about?
(pause)
Incest?

CHUCK
It just doesn't look right. I don't know how brothers and sisters carry on where you come from, but...

ABBY
(interrupting)
Did you ever have a brother.

CHUCK
No.

ABBY
Then who are you to judge? Maybe if you had, you'd understand. Anyway, times have changed while you've been stuck out in this weed patch. We're not still back in the 1800s, in case

She puts on a robe and walks out. Her last argument has worked best. Chuck never imagined he was in step with the times.

191 EXT. BELVEDERE

Abby slips out the front door. She looks around to make sure that Chuck is not watching her, then heads off to find Bill. The vaudevillians gorge themselves on last night's leftovers, steal flowers from the flower beds, etc. ONE sits off by himself, playing a French horn.

192 EXT. DORM

She finds Bill by the dorm throwing a switchblade in the ground, a toothbrush in his mouth.

ABBY
I have to talk to you.

BILL
Look what I traded off those clowns. For a bushel of corn!

She draws him by the arm behind a wall. She is trembling with fear.

ABBY
Chuck is suspicious.

BILL
Chickie you mean? So what?

ABBY
Really. This is the first time he's ever been like <u>this</u>. I'm scared.

All this flatters Chuck in a way Bill does not like.

BILL
What for? Why're <u>you</u> so worried what he thinks?

ABBY
He could kill us. I want to live a long time, okay? I just got started and I like it.

Bill shrugs, as though to say he can handle whatever Chuck can dish out and a little more.

ABBY
You might take a little responsibility here. You got us into all this.

BILL

Did I? Well, it never would've come up if you hadn't led him on. Led Chickie on!

ABBY

Is that the best you can do? Knowing you it probably is. You've made a mess of our lives, okay. Don't pretend it was my fault.

Bill combs his hair to calm himself down.

BILL

Why's this guy still hanging on like a goddamn snapping turtle? Because of you. Boy, this was a great idea. Right up there with Lincoln going down to the theater, see what's on!

ABBY

Keep your voice down.

BILL

Don't give me that. When a guy's getting screwed, he's got a right to holler.

ABBY

You're such a fool!

BILL

What?

ABBY

Nothing.

BILL

I heard what you said.

ABBY

Then why'd you ask? Oh, how did I ever get mixed up with you?

Abby, in terror of Chuck's finding out, cannot understand why Bill seems to care so little.

BILL

You've gone sweet on him. You have, haven't you?

Abby hesitates. Bill throws his knife away.

ABBY
I admire him. He's a good man.

BILL
Broad shoulders. I know. Very high morals. Why can't he talk faster? It's like waiting for a hen to lay an egg.

ABBY
You wouldn't understand, though. He's not like you. You don't know how people feel. You only think of yourself.

BILL
What's going on between us, Abby? Think about that. If you figure it out, tell me, will you? I'd appreciate it.
(pause)
Lord, but you do come on! You talking like this, used to play around right under his nose. Somebody I met in a bar, remember? Or maybe you walked in, thought it was a church. Well, I've had it. I'm clearing out. You understand?

They look at each other for a moment.

ABBY
Go ahead.

This is not what he expected to hear. But now his pride requires that he face the truth and not back down.

BILL
Okay.

He looks at her for a moment. He cannot be dealt with this way. He turns and walks off.

193 NEW ANGLE

Ursula flirts with George. He slips a hand inside her blouse. She bats it away.

194 EXT. BEDROOM WINDOW

Bill stands on the ground below the master bedroom. Chuck leans out the window above him. Peacocks roost on the balcony, beneath the telescope. The vaudevillians are loading up their planes. Abby watches from the porch.

BILL
I'm going away for a while. They're giving me a lift.

CHUCK
What for?

He shrugs.

BILL
I'm wearing one of your shirts. Let me take it off for you.

CHUCK
Never mind.

BILL
I got my own. Just wasn't any clean today.

Bill takes off the shirt, drapes it over a post and walks off, hurt and angry, but with a sad dignity.

Chuck is not entirely sorry to see him go, nor is Abby; she knows that he is getting out just in time. One more episode like last night's and the fuse would hit the powder.

195 NEW ANGLE

Bill gives Ursula his money.

BILL
We get split up for any reason, you spend that on school.

196 EXT. PRAIRIE

The vaudevillians are ready to take off. Bill boards the plane which George is piloting, wondering if today's break with Abby is real or just in anger, a necessary gesture. With him he carries his only possessions, a bindle and his trick rabbit. Abby, Chuck and Ursula look on.

CHUCK
What's eating him?

Abby shrugs and walks down to Ursula.

URSULA
Why aren't we going with him?

ABBY
What for? To sleep in boxcars?

197 AIRPLANES

The planes set their wheels in the furrows, rev their engines and wobble off into the sky. Ursula waves good-bye to George.

198 EXT. PLAINS UNDER SNOW - SERIES OF ANGLES

Winter has come. Snow falls across the breadth of the plains, on the river and the dark sleeping fields.

199 EXT. SLEIGH (OR ICE BOAT) - SNOW

Chuck and Abby skim over the snow in a gaily painted sleigh (or ice boat). She is wrapped up snug in a buffalo robe, her feet on a hot brick. Pigs forage along the fences.

200 INT. CAVE

They inspect a cave with a kerosene lantern. Blocks of ice, covered with burlap and sawdust, cool shelves of preserves.

Abby drops a stone into a dark pit. Two seconds pass before it hits the bottom.

ABBY
Probably that's the first noise down there for thousands of years.

She speaks as though she had done it a favor. He puts his hand on hers. She presses it against her chest.

ABBY
You ever wish you could turn your heart off for a second and see what happened?

201 OTHER ANGLES

Views of backlit gems, stalactites, salamanders in their cold dark pools, hidden springs and other mysteries of nature.

ABBY (o.s.)
Maybe nothing would.

They round a corner and come upon an underground waterfall. It flows out of darkness back into darkness.

202 INT. FORGE

Bill, meanwhile, stands in a line of panting, sweating IMMIGRANTS.

On their shoulders they carry the huge barrel of a cannon. With a grunt they drive it into the fiery mouth of a forge.

203 EXT. CITY STREET

Bill stands on the corner of a big city street, stamping his feet against the cold. He tries to catch a pigeon with some bread crumbs under a box propped up by a stick, but just as he pulls the string to drop the trap it darts out of the way.

204 BILL AND YOUNG GIRL

Bill has an improvised conversation with a YOUNG GIRL who has run away from home. He asks her where she comes from, whom she belongs to, etc. She tells him of her hopes, then passes on. Bill gives her all the money in his pocket.

205 MONTAGE

Enthralled, Abby surveys the wonders of Babylon and Nineveh in a book about the Near East.

Ursula sits with a world globe, taking a geography lesson from a traveling TUTOR. No doubt this was Abby's idea.

Abby copies from a small plaster model of a Roman bust. She wants painfully to improve herself.

206 EXT. FROZEN LAKE - NIGHT

Abby and Chuck skate around a bonfire on a frozen prairie lake, carrying torches to guide them through the dark.

207 INT. CHICAGO FLOPHOUSE

Bill sits in a cold flophouse trying to write a letter. After a moment he wads it up and throws it away.

208 EXT. BELVEDERE

Abby, Ursula and Chuck are on a walk outside the Belvedere. The snow is gone. Abby's hands are stuffed in a chinchilla muff.

All at once they hear a distant noise like the whoops of an Indian war party. It seems mysteriously to come from every hilltop. Abby turns to Chuck with a puzzled look.

CHUCK
Prairie chickens. That means winter's broken.

ABBY
Really? Where are they?

CHUCK
You hardly ever see them.

They stand and listen to the birds. There is a sense of the earth stirring back to life. Abby breathes in with a wild joy and hugs Chuck tightly by the waist.

209 EXT. TENEMENT HALLWAY

Bill is talking with a FRIEND in the hallway of a tenement.

BILL
I can't seem to get my mind on anything. I thought, when I came off that place, boy, they'd better get all the women out of town that day, you know? Somewhere safe. But you know what I do? I sleep, nothing but sleep.

A PANHANDLER approaches them with a hard-luck story.

FRIEND
Okay, here's a quarter, but give me some entertainment, okay? Not this old song and dance.

While the Panhandler performs, Bill looks around.

Two POLICEMEN have appeared in the entryway talking with the LANDLADY. Bill edges out the back door and down the steps, as though they might be after him.

He walks briskly down the alley without looking back.

210 TIGHT ON CHUCK (DISSOLVE TO DIARY)

Chuck holds a handful of seed under his nose. His heart stirs at the dark, mellow smell.

Into this dissolves an image of Abby writing in her diary.

211 EXT. FIELD

Chuck swings a barometer round and round, checking the weather. Two Case tractors pitch across a field like boats on a rolling sea. Long plumes of smoke wind off behind them. Each tows a fourteen-gang plow. A third tractor follows, putting in the seed.

Ursula chases a flock of blackbirds off with a big rattle. Every acre of ground for as far as the eye can see is under cultivation.

ABBY (o.s.)
They put in the wheat the other day. This will be the biggest year ever. There was a scare when a locust turned up. Luckily it wasn't the bad kind.

212 NEW ANGLE

The plows have turned up a hibernating locust. Chuck stands by the tractor, inspecting it under a magnifying glass. The creature nestles like a fossil in the black earth.

ABBY (o.s.)
They sleep in the ground for seventeen years, then crawl up around the end of May and spend a week flying around before they die.

Chuck kicks up the dirt around the plow, looking for others. Benson, back from exile, looks concerned.

CHUCK
Nothing to worry about. Just shows the land is good.

213 SERIES OF ANGLES

Various wonders of the prairie: a charred tree, a huge mastodon bone, a flowering bush, a pelican, the rusted hulk of an ancient machine, etc.

ABBY (o.s.)
How strange this new world is! You walk out in the morning sometimes to find a lake rippling where the day before solid land was.

214 EXT. STONE BOAT

Chuck has laid out the outline of a 50' boat in white-washed stones. He walks around the imaginary deck showing Abby where the cabins will be.

ABBY (o.s.)
Chuck wants to build a boat and take us off to Java, which he's never seen.

215 EXT. FIELDS

Ursula goes out to the fields with an organist named JOEY whom Chuck has hired to play for the crops. He and Ursula seem to hit it off.

ABBY (o.s.)
Last month he brought in a kid to play the organ. He claims it helps the crops grow. Personally I doubt it.

216 EXT. MIDDLE OF FIELDS

They have brought an organ out into the middle of the fields. Ursula pumps up the bellows. Joey sits in front of the keyboard and shoots his cuffs.

His fingers strike the keys.

217 CLOUDS, CLOSEUPS OF PLANTS - TIME LAPSE PHOTOGRAPHY (STOCK)

Clouds build in huge toadstools. Thunder rolls across the plains. A rain begins to fall.

The music seems to work a magic on the crops, to draw them forth. The seeds germinate in the darkness of the soil. Water finds its way down. Roots, tiny hairs at first, spread and grow.

218 DOLLS, TIGHT ANGLES ON THEIR FACES

Rude dolls fixed at the ends of pointed sticks -- agricultural fetishes that Chuck's father brought with him from the Old World -- stand around the field to join in aiding the crops.

219 EXT. BELVEDERE

Flags and bunting adorn the porch for Independence Day. Ursula sets off some fireworks.

ABBY (o.s.)
Time has flown, and once again harvest is near.

220 EXT. GREEN FIELDS (TRIFFIDS)

The bald earth has, as though by a mystery, become a sheet of grain, its green already fading to gold. The music dies away, replaced by the whirr of summer crickets.

ABBY (o.s.)
It will be a year that we have been here.

The camera holds and holds on the fields until in their vacant depths, we begin to sense the presence of a deep malevolence, still biding its time but growing every minute.

Seagulls -- like strange emissaries from another world -- glide back and forth over the fields in search of grasshoppers.

221 INT. LANTERN - NIGHT

Ursula takes curling irons from the chimney of a lantern, where she has set them to heat, and applies them to Abby's hair.

URSULA
Suppose I never fall in love, Abby?

ABBY
Don't be silly. Everybody does. What do you think all those songs are about? You need to be careful, though, and not throw it away.

URSULA
Throw what away?

ABBY
You know, your chances. It's too hard to explain to a little squirrel like you.

URSULA
That sounded just like Bill. Don't you miss him?

ABBY
Sometimes.

From her tone, however, we sense that she finds it easier with him gone.

222 INT. MASTER BEDROOM

Abby whispers something to Chuck in bed that evening.

CHUCK
You ever said that to anybody else?

She giggles.

CHUCK
You're lying, aren't you? Well, go right on lying.

The camera moves to the window, beneath the eave. Outside, peacocks strut back and forth.

223 EXT. MUDDY ROAD

Bill rides an Indian motorcycle along a muddy road back to the bonanza. His rabbit is strapped to the back. He stops for a moment to look at the new fields.

224 EXT. BELVEDERE - BILL'S POV

Abby sings to herself as she beats out a carpet. Bill appears on the ridge behind her. Hope leaves him like a ghost. She looks happily settled into a new life with Chuck. All at once she turns around.

ABBY
Bill!

She rushes up and embraces him, but her warmth just seems a tease to Bill. She is different. She looks different. The tutors and tailors Chuck has brought in over the winter have given her more polish. Her hair is nicely coiffed. Where she used to dress in cotton shirtwaists, she wears crinolines now.

BILL
How's everybody been?

ABBY
Including me? Okay. Gee, you look good.

BILL
Thanks. And Chuck?

ABBY
Still the same.

BILL
Actually I didn't mean it that way.
(pause)
I came back to help out with the harvest.

He feels humiliated at not having a stronger excuse. But he loves her. He aches with love. He hoped their last fight was just another storm in the romance. Evidently it was more.

BILL
I thought about you a lot. Wrote you a letter, but it was no good, so I tore it up.

ABBY
How'd you come?

BILL
Train.

He looks her up and down.

BILL
Nice dress.

ABBY
I'm glad you like it.

He admires her garden. His familiar cockiness vanishes as little by little he sees the old feeling is not there.

BILL
This is new, too.

ABBY
The daffodils were already here, but I put in the rest. You really do like them?

At a shriek from Ursula, Bill turns around. She runs into his arms, and covers him with kisses.

URSULA
I've missed you! I thought about you every day. You should've written. Did Abby show you what she got?

Abby scowls at Ursula. With no choice but to show him, she opens the top button of her blouse and draws out a diamond necklace.

ABBY
(apologetically)
For Christmas.

URSULA
Plus a music box. He spoils her. Why don't they spoil me, too?
(whispering)
You oughta be glad you didn't have to spend the winter. You would've gone crazy.

225 TIGHT ON ABBY

The winter's peace is gone. Abby is sick with fear. Now that she loves Chuck, too, she can never again be honest with Bill. The truth of her feelings would crush him. Moreover, there's no telling how he might react. He could ruin everything, even get them killed.

226 EXT. BEDROOM WINDOW

Chuck looks on from behind the bedroom window.

227 EXT. DINNER TABLE

They dine in awkward silence. Benson has joined them. Abby, for all her winter's polish, still eats with the back of her knife.

CHUCK
How was Chicago?

BILL
Great.

ABBY
How's everybody doing?

BILL
Okay.

They are silent for a moment. Bill senses that nobody except Ursula is really glad to see him back.

ABBY
How's Blackie?

BILL
Still hasn't wised up. Know what I mean? He asked how you were doing, though.
(pause)
I told him. Ran into Sam, too. He'd been in a fight.

ABBY
Oh yeah?

Bill can see that her interest is only polite. He knows that he should turn around and leave, but he cannot. The sight of him with his confidence gone is painful to behold.

BILL
His nose was like this.

He pushes his nose to one side. Ursula and Abby laugh.

228 EXT. STOCK POND

Bill plants willow slips in the soft earth by the stock pond. Ursula orders a dog around.

URSULA
Look at this dog mind me. Sit! You've got to say it like hitting a nail.

BILL
Has she asked you anything about me?

URSULA
No.

Ursula flirts with him, running the shoots along his back. She waits to see what he will do. He gets up and after a short chase catches her. He holds her at arm's length for a moment, then kisses her.

URSULA
What'd you do that for?

Bill wonders himself. To get revenge on Abby? He touches her breast.

URSULA
Don't.

BILL
Why not?

URSULA
'Cause there's nothing there.

BILL
I can be the judge of that.

URSULA
Then ask first.

He kisses her neck.

BILL
Nobody has to know but us chickens.
(pause)
What do I have to say to convince you? You tell me, I'll say it.

URSULA
What makes you think I would?

BILL
Nothing.

She giggles and kisses him back. But guilt has caught up with him. He cannot go ahead.

URSULA
What's the matter?

No reply.

URSULA
Maybe it would be wrong.
(disappointed)
You still love her, don't you?

Bill hums a rock off toward the horizon.

BILL
I should've gone in the church,
like my father was after me to.

229 BILL'S POV - OUTSIDE THE BELVEDERE - NIGHT

Chuck and Abby sit in their cozy living room playing Parcheesi. The sound of their voices is muffled. The camera draws back to reveal Bill outside the window, watching.

She is comfortable with Chuck now. Apparently, he has lost his place in her heart. He wants to rush in and drag her away.

230 EXT. BEDROOM WINDOW - NIGHT

Later that night he stands under the bedroom window and wonders at the meaning of the shadows that flicker across the ceiling. After a moment he withdraws into the darkness.

231 EXT. SMALL PRAIRIE TOWN (DUCK LAKE)

Bill has brought Abby into a nearby town to make some purchases. Dressed in a chauffeur's gown and goggles, he sits against the fender of the Overland watching her move from store to store. Ursula is with her.

The TOWNSPEOPLE all speak German. Their peasant costumes are freely mixed with Western dress. The signs are in old German script. Two MEN carry a huge bulb through the street, to put atop a church.

232 OVERLAND AUTO

Abby walks up with Ursula.

URSULA
Listen, I'm going to stay and go
back with the laundry wagon.

Abby looks at Bill, then nods okay. Ursula runs off. Bill opens the door, and she gets in.

233 EXT. ROAD OUTSIDE TOWN (DUCK LAKE)

They are stopped on the road a hundred yards outside the town.

START

Abby smokes as Bill checks the radiator. Something in his behavior leads us to suspect he may have staged this stop.

BILL
How you been doing?

ABBY
Me? Fine.

BILL
We don't talk so much these days.

ABBY
I know.

She knows what he wants. She cannot give it anymore.

BILL
I said a lot of stupid things before I went off.

ABBY
(politely)
I forgot about it already.

Bill, trying his best to make peace with her, cannot help seeing that she would like to keep things as they are -- and not because she harbors any grudge.

BILL
You've forgiven me?

ABBY
There was nothing to forgive.

He holds a bottle of liquor out to her.

BILL
What're you worried about?

She takes a swig. He laughs. She laughs back.

BILL
So how'm I doing with you?

ABBY
Fine.

He takes her hand and holds it like a trapped bird.

BILL
What's happened?

She shrugs, disengaging her hand to brush aside her hair. She is painfully aware of his suffering but doesn't have the heart to tell him how it all is.

BILL
I probably ought to leave. I will.

ABBY
Already? You just got here.

She hasn't really contradicted him. He leans forward as though to kiss her. She lets him. She wishes that she could give herself to him, but she doesn't know what is right. Then, a sudden impulse of panic, she gets up and backs away.

BILL
Where you going?

He reaches out to catch her. She breaks away and starts to run. He walks quickly after her, cutting off any escape toward the town.

ABBY
Why'd you have to come back?

BILL
I'm not going to hurt you. I only want to talk with you.

She stops and hides her face in her hands. He gently pulls them away.

BILL
I didn't come back to make trouble for you. I guess we were fooling each other to think it could last. I mean, what was I offering you anyhow? A ride to the bottom. Looking at you now, in the right clothes and everything, I see how crazy I was and -- well, I understand. It's okay. I sort of cut my own throat, actually.

Her eyes close and her legs give in. Bill lets her go and backs off a step in surprise. She sinks to the ground, as though in a trance.

234 TIGHT ON BILL

Bill, taken by surprise, goes up and kneels down beside her. He looks to see that she is okay. He picks a foxtail out of her hair. Her dress has worked up toward her knees. He pulls it back down. He wants to caress her face but hesitates.

BILL
How'd we let it happen, Abby? We were so happy once. Why didn't we starve? I love you so much. What have I done? You're so beautiful. What have I done?

He touches his lips for a fraction of a second to hers, notices another car approaching down the road. He picks her up like a doll and carries her back to the Overland.

235 EXT. BELVEDERE - CHUCK'S POV

They have just arrived back at the Belvedere.

ABBY
I'm sorry.

She touches his face in a surge of sympathy. What has she done to him? He kisses her neck and leads her toward the front door.

236 CRANE TO CHUCK

The camera rises to the uppermost story of the Belvedere. Chuck has seen them. Hot tears leap to his eyes. Before Bill left for the winter he often observed such intimacies between them. Now it all looks different.

237 CHUCK'S POVS (HIGH ANGLES)

He looks around at his estate -- his barn, his auto, his great house and his granary. None of them is any consolation now. For a moment it seems to him as though he lived here in some time long past.

238 INT. BEDROOM

Abby notices Chuck watching her outside the bedroom door.

ABBY
You want something from me?

CHUCK
No.

ABBY
Will you hand me that magazine?

He gives her the magazine she wants.

ABBY
What's the matter?

He seems for a moment to consider telling her, then shrugs and goes downstairs.

239 INT. LIVING ROOM

He stumbles into a bird cage but hardly notices. The jostled birds raise a fuss.

240 EXT. FRONT PORCH

He runs into Bill on the front porch.

BILL
I've been looking for you. I have to take off again, real soon here, and...

Chuck puts a hand on Bill's shoulder, stopping him. They look at each other for a moment, then he passes on. Bill seems puzzled.

241 EXT. FIELDS

Chuck walks out into the deep of his fields. The wheat, a warm dry gold, is almost ready to take in. He sits down and rests his head against a furrow, powerless to think. The wind makes a song in the infinitude of sweet clicking heads.

He puts his hands over his heart and breathes in gasps, with the dumb honesty of a wounded animal. He could not himself quite say what it is that he knows.

242 EXT. BONANZA - SERIES OF ANGLES

Late that afternoon disaster strikes as a swarm of locusts sweeps down on the bonanza. We do not see where they come from. They seem to appear out of nowhere, unnoticed. Ursula works in the kitchen, Bill by the barn. Chuck lies asleep in the field, Abby upstairs in bed.

243 ANIMALS ON BONANZA

The animals sense it first. The buffalo move off in a mass. The horses become uncontrollable. One runs around the barn in a panic. Bill watches it, puzzled.

Two peacocks have a fight.

A dog in the treadmill races in vain to escape, driving the machine to a feverish pitch.

The shadow of a giant cloud licks over the hills.

244 EXT. FIELDS

Everything seems normal in the fields.

Then, as you listen, a strange new sound begins to rise from them, a wild sea-like singing. As the camera moves over the fields and down into the wheat it swells in a crescendo until...

245 TIGHT ON LOCUSTS

Suddenly we see them up close, devouring the stalks in a fever, the noise of their jaws magnified a thousand times.

They slip into the Belvedere, under the sash and wainscoting, turning up first in places it would seem they could never get into: a jewelry case, the back of a radio, the works of a music box, a bottle with a miniature ship inside, etc.

246 EXTREME CLOSEUPS

Their eyes are dumb and implacable. They seem to have a whole hidden life of their own.

247 INT. KITCHEN

Little by little they gather in numbers. Ursula first sees one on the drainboard. She swats it with a newspaper. Others sprout up. One by one she picks them up with a tongs and drops them into the stove. This method is too slow. She begins to use her fingers. She moves with a quick, nervous energy, even as she understands this is futile. At last claustrophobia seizes her. She spins around with a shriek, lashing out at everything in sight.

248 INT. MASTER BEDROOM

In the bedroom overhead, Abby wakes up from one nightmare into another. She jumps out of bed and goes to the window. The locusts pelt against the pane like shot. She throws the bolt. Suddenly a crack shoots through the glass. She jumps back and watches in horror as a sliver of the pane falls in. They are free to enter.

249 SERIES OF ANGLES

Suddenly they are everywhere: on the clothesline, in the pantry, in hats and shoes and the seams of clothing. Not a nook or cranny is safe from penetration.

250 TIGHT ON CHUCK - SLOW MOTION

Chuck, asleep in the deep of the wheat, bolts up in slow motion. His hair is seething with them.

251 EXT. BONANZA - FURTHER ANGLES

Panic hits the bonanza. Workers tie string around their pant cuffs to keep the insects from crawling up their legs, then rush out to the fields with gongs, rattles, pot lids, scarecrows on sticks, drums and horns and other noisemakers to scare them off.

Some pray. Others run around like madmen, stamping and yelling, ignored by the gathering host. A couple get into a fistfight.

A storm flag is run up the flagpole. A tractor blasts out an S.O.S. The peacocks huddle under the stoop.

252 TIGHT ON CHUCK

Chuck gives Benson his orders.

CHUCK
Offer fifty cents a bushel for them. Get out the reapers. See what you can harvest.

253 HIGH DOWN ANGLE

The locusts snap through the air. Bill, swatting at them with a shovel, stops to gag. One has flown into his mouth.

254 TIGHT ON GEARS

They jam up the gears of the machinery with the crush of their bodies.

255 INT. MASTER BEDROOM

Abby throws a sheet over herself, but they get in under it. She thrashes around madly, then with a cry goes limp.

256 CHUCK AND BENSON

Benson reports back to Chuck. A team of horses races by, nearly bowling them over.

BENSON
We can't get the machines out. They're jamming up the gears. There's a good chance they'll pass on south, though. Unless... unless a wind comes up.

CHUCK
What happens then?

BENSON
They'll set down and walk in.

257 SIGNS OF DAMAGE

The locusts devour not just the crops but every organic thing: pitchfork handles, linens on the clothesline, leather traces, flowers in the window boxes, etc. Soon a large area of wheat is eaten down to stubble.

Bill looks away from a tree for a second. When he turns back it has been stripped to a wintry bareness.

258 EXT. WIND GENERATOR, OTHER ANGLES

The vanes of the wind generator begin gently to stir. Little by little the wind picks up. A dust devil spins across the yard. The grass lists by the well. A power line moans.

259 EXT. FIELDS

As the sun dips below the horizon, the locusts pour in like a living river, walking along the ground like a procession of Army ants. The roar of their wings is deafening. The air hisses and pops with their electric frenzy.

260 STOCK AND MATTE SHOTS - SUNSET

And these are but the advance elements of a main force which looms like a silver cloud on the horizon.

261 EXT. BONFIRE - NIGHT

WORKERS dump bushels of the insects into a bonfire. A MAN with an abacus keeps track of what each is owed.

262 SAME FIELDS - NIGHT

The wind has picked up. Chuck, Bill and Abby have come out to the fields with a dozen WORKERS to investigate the extent of the damage. The insects buzz around blindly in the light of their lanterns, which they carry Japanese-fashion at the ends of cane poles.

263 TIGHT ON CHUCK - NIGHT

Chuck inspects the grain.

CHUCK
There's nothing we can do but wait. They're either going to take it all or they're not.

He covers his face with his hands. The others shy back at this display of grief, startling in one so formal. Their jostled lanterns cast a dance of lights.

Bill, moved to real sympathy, takes him by the shoulders.

BILL
Come on. They might still lift. Hey, I've seen a wind like this lay down and <u>die</u>. Don't give up now.

CHUCK
(ignoring him)
We could at least make sure they don't get the people on south.

He breaks open the mantle of his lantern, still unsure what he should do. Some of the flaming kerosene splashes onto the crops nearby, setting them ablaze. Bill drops his rattle and swats the fire out with his coat.

BILL
What're you doing? Watch it! What're you, crazy? There's still a chance, don't you see?

Chuck goes to his horse. Bill grabs him by the sleeve. Does he really mean to set the fields on fire? Chuck pushes him aside. Bill, frantic, turns to the others for support.

BILL
Stop him, or it's all going up.

They, however, are too uncertain of their ground to intervene. Chuck turns on Bill.

CHUCK
What does it matter to <u>you</u>?

Chuck slings fire out of the broken lantern onto the crops next to Bill -- a sudden, hostile gesture that catches them all by surprise. Independent of his will, the truth is forcing its way up, like a great blind fish from the bottom of the sea.

He slings the fire out again. A patch lands on Bill's pantleg. Bill slaps it out.

BILL
What's got into you?

They stare at each other. Bill backs off like a cat, sensing Chuck knows the truth, but at a loss to understand how he could.

CHUCK
Why do you care? I gave my life for this land.

Chuck walks towards him. Suddenly Bill turns and takes off running. Chuck swings at him with the lantern. Bill escapes behind the building wall of flame that springs up between them.

The whirr of the locusts stops for a moment -- they seem at times to have a collective mind -- then, just as mysteriously, resumes.

ABBY
Stop, Chuck!

Chuck leaps on his horse. She tries to drag him off but is thrown aside and almost trampled underfoot. Now the others join in, trying to knock away the lantern or catch his stirrup. He eludes them and rides off after Bill, leaving a slash of flame behind him in the grain. They tear off their coats to swat it out, in vain -- already it stretches a hundred yards.

264 BILL

Bill runs through the night, still carrying his lantern. Chuck bears down on him. Abby chases along behind, screaming for him to stop.

Bill realizes the lantern is giving his position away. He blows it out and vanishes from sight. All we can see is the thundering horseman, sowing fire.

265 CRANE SHOT

With a rough idea where Bill is, Chuck begins to lay a ring of fire around him, fifty yards in diameter.

266 BILL AND ABBY INSIDE RING

Abby spots Bill against the flames. She rushes on, gasping. They have been caught inside the ring.

BILL
What're you doing? This is a bad place to talk.

He throws his coat over Abby's head, picks her up by the waist and crashes through the flame. They have to shout to make themselves understood. The locusts roar like a cyclone.

BILL
Did you see that? He was trying to burn me. What's got into him?

ABBY
He knows. He must.

BILL
A whole year's work. All wasted! These bugs, once they make up their minds...

Bill stalls. The fire races toward them through the wheat. They appear as silhouettes against it.

BILL
I need to get out of here. I think you probably should, too.
(pause)
Hell of a life. Damned if you do and damned if you don't.

He leaves. Abby wonders if she ought to run after him.

ABBY
Bill!

But this moment's hesitation has been too long. Already he is swallowed up in the night, her voice swept away in the roar of the flame and the locusts, who seem to wail louder now, and with a great mournfulness -- like keening Arab women -- as if they knew the fate shortly to envelop them.

Abby turns back. She, too, has reason to fear Chuck and must escape.

267 NEW ANGLE

Benson rallies the workers.

BENSON
There's still a chance they're going to fly.

VOICES
Get the tractor out! The pump wagon! Blankets!

They rush off to find equipment to fight the fire.

268 ISOLATED ON CHUCK - NIGHT

Chuck rides through the dark like a lone Horseman of the Apocalypse, setting his fields on fire.

269 EXT. PLAINS ON FIRE - SERIES OF ANGLES - NIGHT

Tractors attempt to plow a firebreak. Mad silhouettes run back and forth, slapping at the blaze with wet gunny sacks fixed to the ends of sticks. Two dormitories burn out of control.

Ursula throws open the barn and lets the horses out. They have raised a thunder kicking at their stalls. The light above the barn door pulses erratically.

270 EXPLOSIONS - NIGHT (MINIATURES)

Oil wells explode along the horizon. Huge balls of flame roll into the heavens.

271 EXT. BURNING PLAINS - NIGHT

Panic spreads among the workers as the holocaust threatens to engulf them. They throw down their tools and run for their lives.

272 ANIMALS - NIGHT

Animals flee in all directions: birds and deer and rabbits, pigs, buffalo and the horses from the barn. The locusts mill around crazily on the wheat stalks, backlit against the flame.

273 BILL - NIGHT

Bill, fleeing on his motorbike with his rabbit, holds up for a moment to watch the fire -- a Biblical inferno of spectacular sweep.

274 EXT. BEDROOM WINDOW - TRACKING SHOT (CHUCK'S POV) - NIGHT

A single light burns in the Belvedere.

275 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Heaving with sobs, Abby throws her things into a bindle. She has lost Chuck forever. Their life is destroyed. She glances out the window. She still has time to get away, but she must hurry. She bolts for the door. Suddenly Chuck steps from the shadows, blocking her exit.

His face, black with soot, looks gruesome in the gaslight. The locusts have chewed up his clothes.

Abby is like a frightened deer. Did he see her packing?

CHUCK
You look as though you'd seen a ghost.
(pause)
Where you going?
(pause)
Off with him?

The wind cuts gaps in the death wail of the locusts. From time to time we hear the thump of an exploding well.

CHUCK
He's not your brother, is he?

How much does he know? She edges toward the door.

ABBY
Why do you say that?

CHUCK
Come here a minute. Who are you?
(no reply)
Where'd you come from?

ABBY
I told you.

He shakes her. She quivers like a child in his grasp. She no longer has the audacity to lie.

ABBY
How long have you known?

He drops his eyes. Shamefully long -- and his anger is partly just at this.

CHUCK
What'd you want?

He punches in the shade of a lamp, extinguishing it.

CHUCK
Tell me.

He shoves over the chest of drawers. She does not move. He tears down the drapes, already in shreds.

CHUCK
This? Show me what you wanted! I would have given it all to you.

ABBY
Please, Chuck.

CHUCK
Please what? You're not going to tell me you're sorry, I hope.

ABBY
But I <u>am</u>.

Outside the window fires rage along half the horizon. He sits down. He wants to sob, but cannot.

CHUCK
You're so wonderful. How could you do this?

ABBY
I'm just no good. You picked me from the gutter, and this is how -- I never deserved you.

CHUCK
(interrupting)
The things you <u>told</u> me.

ABBY
I love you, though. You have to believe me. It may sound false after...

CHUCK
(interrupting)
Down at the cave. Don't you remember? I <u>believed</u> them.

ABBY
All right. I'm going away. You'll never have to see me again.

CHUCK
Away?

He gets up, suddenly alarmed, walks to the mantel and opens a chest.

ABBY
What're you doing?

Chuck drapes his neck with the stole he used in slaughtering the hog. Her face goes empty. He gets his razor strop from the shaving basin. She shrinks back in the corner. He looks at her for a moment, then leaves the room.

276 INT. STAIRCASE - NIGHT

Abby pursues him down the stairs. He throws her aside.

ABBY
Where are you going? Chuck! What are you doing? I won't let you! Come back!

Again he throws her aside, and again she keeps after him, desperate to prevent any harm coming to Bill. Finally he picks her up and drags her outside.

277 EXT. PORCH - NIGHT

He lashes her with a rope to a column of the porch. She struggles vainly to free herself. Does he intend to use the razor on her?

ABBY
No, Chuck! Please, darling! It wasn't his fault. It was mine. Let him go. I love you, Chuck. Do anything, only please...

CHUCK
I'm sick of hearing lies.

He stuffs a handkerchief in her mouth and leaves.

278 TIGHT ON CHUCK - NIGHT

Chuck wanders through the night with a lantern, calling his mare.

279 EXT. BURNT-OUT FIELDS - DAWN

Dawn breaks. Chuck rides over the burnt-out fields looking for Bill. The feet of his lank white mare are wrapped to the fetlock in wet burlap, to protect them from the smouldering grass. It prances warily along, without making a sound, wreathed in a mist of blue smoke.

With him he carries a stool. The camera pans up to the smoke which is carrying his fortune off.

280 CHUCK'S POVS

Burnt, blind deer stand and look at him in utter terror, as though they understood his intentions.

The roasted corpses of sharptail grouse, coyotes and badgers lie scattered here and there. Piles of dung burn on after the grass is out.

A peacock from the Belvedere wanders around, angry and perplexed.

281 BILL

Bill is repairing his motorbike by a rock in the middle of the scorched landscape. The tires are soft as licorice from the heat. Suddenly, he looks up. Chuck has found him.

He jumps behind the handlebars and fishtails off. Chuck breaks into a gallop, rides him down, knocks him to the ground with the stool, dismounts and stamps in the spokes of the front wheel to make sure he goes no further.

BILL
Who do you think you are? Now you've ruined it. What's got into you?

CHUCK
Where you headed?

BILL
Why do I have to tell you? I can come and go when I like. This is still a free country, last I heard.

Bill stops when he sees the stool. Chuck calmly strops the razor on his stirrup flap. There are no secrets now.

BILL
What can I say? Too late for apologies. You've got a right to hate me.

Chuck puts the razor away and advances on Bill with the stool.

BILL
I want to leave. You won't ever see me again. I already got what I deserve.

There is nothing Bill can say to appease him. This will be a fight to the death. Chuck lashes out with the stool. Bill ducks too late.

BILL
Watch it!

Chuck comes at him again. Bill throws a punch, but Chuck blocks it and knocks him down again with the stool.

Bill reels back and cracks his head on the bicycle frame. This time he stays down. Satisfied the struggle is over, Chuck goes back to get some rope.

282 NEW ANGLE

Chuck shuts his eyes to mumble a prayer of absolution -- in Russian.

Bill in a panic, snaps a spoke out of the broken wheel and lays it against his sleeve.

Chuck moves in for the kill. Bill gets to his feet. He wants to run but fear makes his knees like water. Suddenly, they are face to face. Chuck swings at Bill with the stool but misses. Bill lifts the spoke above him and drives it deep into Chuck's heart.

Chuck gasps. Bill seems just as shocked. Chuck sits down to determine the gravity of his injury. Blood jets rhythmically out the end of the spoke, as though from a straw. Bill circles him, unbelieving.

BILL
Should I pull it out?

Chuck puts his finger over the end of the spoke. Blood seeps out the side of his mouth, like sap from a broken stem.

BILL
I better get somebody.

He tries to catch the reins of Chuck's horse, but it shies out of reach, its conscience repelled. He looks back at Chuck in anguish. What has he done?

BILL
You were my <u>friend</u>.

283 TIGHT ON BILL AND HIS POVS

The Belvedere is visible on the horizon. Bill hesitates a moment, then heads back on foot to find Abby. He gives Chuck a wide berth.

Then, on a ridge in the distance, he spots Benson.

BILL
Get a doctor! Fast!

How much did he see? Bill does not stay to find out but takes off running, though not without first collecting his rabbit.

Benson, meanwhile, bounds down the hill to Chuck's side. His left sleeve has been burned away. The flesh beneath is the color of a raw steak.

284 CHUCK'S POVS

Chuck sees the smoke from his fields, the burnt deer, a circling hawk.

285 TIGHT ON CHUCK

He breathes in gulps. His eyes are blank, like a child's marbles. He takes Benson's hand.

CHUCK
(weakly)
Wasn't his fault. Tell her... forgive them.

The locusts can be heard no more. The prairie makes a sound like the ocean. Chuck turns his back and dies.

286 TIGHT ON BENSON

Benson weeps. Whether or not he understood Chuck's last wishes, he seems unlikely to abide by them.

287 EXT. BELVEDERE

Bill finds Abby bound to the house like the figurehead of a ship. He cuts her loose. The ropes fall at her feet. She is free. They look at each other for a moment. Then, in a rush of compassion for them all, she throws her arms around him.

Bill wonders if she is taking him back. Might their differences all have been a terrible misunderstanding?

ABBY
We have to hurry. Chuck's out looking right now. Oh, Bill, what have we done? He took his razor. We need to hurry. He might be coming back any minute.

Bill mentions nothing of his encounter. She grabs her bindle, Bill a handful of silverware and an umbrella. After a moment's hesitation, he puts them back.

288 NEW ANGLE

They run down to the barn, where the cars are stored. The saplings in the front yard have been stripped even of their bark. Abby stops to look back at the Belvedere one last time. Chuck does not want her anymore. How could she expect him to?

Bill grabs her by the hand and tugs her along.

289 EXT. BARN

Abby throws open the doors of the barn. Bill cranks up the engine of the Overland.

ABBY
Will the cops be looking for us, too?

BILL
Probably.

Abby stands in the door. She is reluctant to leave, though she knows they must.

BILL
Get in.

She notices that Bill's lip is cut, his shirt soaked with blood.

ABBY
What happened to you? Where's this from?

Bill looks down. He forgot.

BILL
Had an accident.

She looks at him for a moment, not quite trusting this explanation. The engine catches with a noise like startled poultry. Bill gets behind the wheel. Just as they are pulling out of the garage, Ursula runs up, black as coal from battling the fire all night.

URSULA
Where you going?

BILL
(breathless)
We got in a jam. You'll be safer here. Say we're headed for town. Take care of the rabbit, too. He's yours now.

URSULA
What's the matter?

BILL
Just do what I say. Why're you always arguing about everything? Wait here till we get in touch.

Bill gives Ursula his wallet and a kiss. Abby gives her a hug.

290 EXT. BURNT GRASS

They roar off through the burnt grass of the prairie. Abby waves goodbye.

291 THEIR POV (MOVING)

As they crest a ridge, Benson appears in front of them, waving a hand to flag them down. Bill puts his foot on the gas. Benson sees they are not going to stop and fires at them with a pistol. Bill grabs a shotgun from a scabbard under the dash and fires back. Nobody is hurt.

ABBY
What's the matter with him?

Bill shrugs. Inside he feels a great relief. They are free at last. At last he has her back.

292 EXT. BONANZA GATES

They veer off across the prairie, towards the Razumihin gates. The music comes up full.

293 EXT. SHACK ON RIVER

They have come to a lone shack on the river, a drinking house for passing boatmen. They negotiate (in pantomime) with the PROPRIETOR for a tiny steam boat moored at the end of the pier. When the car is not enough, Abby throws in her necklace.

294 ABOARD THE BOAT

They board the boat and turn down stream. There is a phonograph on board.

295 TIGHT ON NECKLACE

The necklace sparkles on the hood of the car — a hint they are leaving behind evidence that could betray them.

296 EXT. BOAT ON RIVER - AND MOVING POVS

They glide along in the hush of evening. The reeds are full of deer. Cranes, imprudently tame, dance on the sand bars.

Bill looks around in wonder. He knows these may be his last days on earth. Abby throws a sounding line.

A COUPLE from a local farm seeks privacy in the willows. Other BOATMEN glide past in silence. A CHILD plays a fiddle on the deck of a scow. HUNTERS creep along the shore in search of waterfowl.

297 EXT. CAMP - DUSK

Bill sleeps under a tarp. Abby looks out across the water and bursts into sobs. She has wronged Chuck and thrown her life away.

298 THEIR POVS (MOVING) - NIGHT

They shine a lamp into the murky depths and spear pickerel with a hammered-out fork.

Strange rocks loom up and give way to wide moonlit fields. They have the sense of entering places where nobody has been since the making of the world.

299 EXT. FARMHOUSE

Four LAWMEN, in pursuit, interrogate some FARMERS. Have they seen the two people standing by Chuck in his wedding portrait? Benson holds the bulky frame. There is a funereal border of black crepe at the corners.

300 EXT. ABOARD THE BOAT - DUSK

They drift idly on the flood. The phonograph is playing in the stern. Abby is back in trousers. Bill points to a white house on the shore, an image of comfort and peace.

BILL
I used to want a set-up like that. Something like that, I thought, and you'd really have it made. Now I don't care. I just wish we could always live this way.

He sees that her mind is somewhere else. He wants to tell her the truth about Chuck, for intimacy's sake, but it would just put more of a cloud over everything. It might even cause her to hate him.

BILL
Maybe you want to write him a letter.

ABBY
I hadn't thought of that.

BILL
You really do love him, don't you?

She does not reply.

BILL
You want to go back?

ABBY
(shaking her head)
Too late for that. I could never face him again.

They look at each other for a moment. He touches her face, to show that he does not hold it against her. She touches him back. They only have each other now. They must save what moments they can.

BILL
Guess it's you and me again.

301 NEW ANGLE

On a sudden whim, Abby takes off her wedding bracelet and holds it over the water.

ABBY
Watch this.

Bill is caught off guard. Before he can make a move she throws it far out into the river. They laugh, without knowing why, at this extravagance.

302 EXT. SHORE - TRACKING SHOTS

They gather May apples and black haws. The music from the phonograph comes up full.

They dig clams from a sand bar in a playful way. We are reminded of their first days on the harvest.

303 EXT. UNDERGROWTH

They make love in the undergrowth.

Abby, afterwards, lies in a naked daze. The damp greens of the wilderness envelop her.

304 THEIR POV - ON CITY ON RIVER - NIGHT

Rounding a bend in the river that night, they come upon the lights of a great city. They have doused the running lamp. Except for a faint groaning of the trees along the shore, the river is silent, conveying the sounds of the city to them from across a great distance -- bells, joyful voices, horns, the chirping of brakes, etc.

305 EXT. CITY STREETS AND THEIR POVS - NIGHT

They sneak down an alley.

There are signs of life behind a few windows, but the city pursues its gaiety elsewhere.

Suddenly, they come upon a POLICEMAN making his rounds. They let him pass, then cut through a vacant lot back to the boat.

306 EXT. RIVER FRONT - DAY

The next morning finds them camped in a thicket on the river front below a factory.

Bill wakes up, mysteriously happy. Their blankets are heavy with dew. Overhead, finches tilt from branch to branch. A light wind rushes through the leaves. Whatever his troubles, they seem very small to him in the great scheme of things.

He looks at Abby, mouthing silent words in her sleep.

He puts on a white scarf and starts down to the boat. The slope is strewn with sodden cartons, burnt bricks and burst mattresses, an avalanche of urban excreta.

307 HIS POV

Abruptly he stops. Two POLICE OFFICERS are combing over the boat. They have not seen him. He edges back.

Suddenly, there is yelling on the hill above them. Bill looks up. Benson is calling him to the attention of a carload of POLICEMEN pulling up beside him. The Officers at the boat now spot him, too, and open fire. Bill darts like a rabbit into the thicket.

308 TIGHT ON ABBY

Abby bolts awake. Bill jumps down beside her, breathless, and begins looking frantically for the shells to his shotgun.

ABBY
What's going on?

BILL
Keep down. Can't explain now. They're here.

ABBY
Who? What're you talking about? Stop a minute.

He covers her with his body as bullets zoom through the undergrowth. His face is close to hers. She bursts into tears.

BILL
Don't get shot. Look for me under that next bridge down. After dark.

He empties out the contents of his pockets -- a watch, a couple of dollars in change, a ring -- and slaps them down in front of her.

The Police fan out along the ridge above them. He jams a flare pistol into his belt and kisses her goodbye -- after a moment's hesitation -- on the cheek. She tries in vain to hold him back.

BILL
I wish I could tell you how much
I love you.

309 EXT. MUD FLAT

Bill runs from the thicket down to the water. The Police have bunched on the other side. It seems he might be able to escape. Keeping low, he splashes across a mud flat.

Suddenly he runs into a trot line that a fisherman has left out overnight. The hooks bite into his thigh and shoulder, yanking a string of startled, thrashing catfish out of the water.

He keeps running in a panic, not realizing the line is staked to the shore. All at once, he jackknifes in the air. The stake twangs loose.

The Police now spot him and begin firing.

310 TIGHT ON ABBY

Abby runs out of hiding, thinking at first that the Police must be looking for her.

ABBY
Why're you shooting? You'll kill
him! Have you gone crazy? Stop!
Oh, Bill, not you! Not you!

311 NEW ANGLE

Bill stumbles along, trying to rip the hooks from his flesh, but the fish -- fighting their way back to the water -- only drive them in deeper.

Ahead two MOUNTED POLICE surge into the river, blocking his retreat.

He empties his shotgun at them and throws it away. They hold up, astonished. He dashes across a sand bar for the deep of the river and comparative safety. Black mud clings to his feet, drawing him down like a fly in molasses.

Benson goes running out into the river ahead of the Police.

BENSON
Leave him alone. I want him.
Leave him alone.
(firing)
There you go! There you go!

He shoots Bill down. Bill turns and looks at him in surprise. Benson shoots him again, point blank.

312 UNDERWATER SHOT

Bill's blood fades off quickly in the gliding water of the river. The line of frightened catfish dances out behind him like a garland.

313 OTHER ANGLES

A dog trots off in alarm.

Benson wades into shore, tears streaming down his face, his chest heaving with emotion.

Abby falls to the ground in a convulsion of grief.

A short way down the river PEOPLE come and go along the bridge where they were to meet.

314 ISOLATED ON ROLLER PIANO

A roller piano sits in a corner by itself, playing a foxtrot. The camera moves back.

315 INT. ARBORETUM - ATTIC

YOUNG DANCERS are learning the foxtrot in the attic of the Arboretum, a tacky Western version of an Eastern finishing school. The steps are painted on the floor as white footprints.

Abby is apparently enrolling Ursula here. The headmistress, MADAME MURPHY, boasts of the school's achievements. Ursula looks trapped. Abby checks her watch. She must go.

316 EXT. BRICK STREET

Abby and Ursula walk down an empty street. Abby wears a mourning band on her sleeve. She is under the false impression that Ursula likes her new home. An INDIAN PORTER carts her bags along behind them in a wheelbarrow.

ABBY
They'll teach you poise, too, so you can walk in any room you please. Pretty soon you'll know all kind of things.
(pause)
I never read a whole book till I was fifteen. It was by Caesar.

They laugh at her careful pronunciation of "Caesar."

317 EXT. TRAIN STATION

Abby's train is about to leave. The CONDUCTOR walks by blowing a whistle. A five-piece BAND plays Sousa airs. They are practically the only civilians on the platform. The rest are SOLDIERS bound for Europe, where America has just entered the War, on fire with excitement and a sense of high adventure.

URSULA
I like your hat.

ABBY
It doesn't seem like a bird came down and landed on my head?

Abby takes the hat off and gives it to Ursula, who lately has begun to take more trouble with her appearance, combing her hair free of its usual snarls. They laugh at their reflection in a window of the train.

ABBY
I hardly ever wear it. Be sure and write every week.

Signals nod. A lamp winks. There are leave-takings up and down the platform as the train slides away. Abby hops on board. A SOLDIER next to her sheds bitter tears.

URSULA
You write me, too!

They wave goodbye.

318 EXT. ARBORETUM - NIGHT

Late that evening Ursula lowers herself out a third-floor window of the Arboretum with a rope made of bedsheets.

319 TIGHT ON GIRLS AT WINDOW

The other GIRLS stand in their nightgowns and wave goodbye, amazed at her boldness.

She slips off into the night.

320 EXT. BACKSTAGE DOOR - NIGHT

Ursula looks in a backstage door. She can see, through the wings, a MAN dancing on stage. There is a feeling of mad excitement about the place.

The person she is looking for is not here, however.

321 EXT. ALLEY - URSULA'S THEME - NIGHT

She runs down an alley. A man steps out of the shadows -- George, the pilot. She throws herself in his arms. This is our first sight of him since he left the bonanza.

URSULA
You're here! Oh, hug me!

They kiss madly. The moonlit, midsummer night thrums with mystery.

URSULA
Aren't we happy? Oh, George, has anybody ever been this happy?

He rocks her back and forth in his arms. They laugh, thinking what lucky exceptions they are to the world's misery.

URSULA
Hurry. They'll be looking for me.

322 EXT. AIRPLANE - DAWN

George bundles Ursula, giggling, into a biplane.

URSULA
This doesn't even belong to you. Suppose they catch us?

323 EXT. PASTURE - DAWN

From a pasture outside town the plane rises into the vast dawn sky.

324 INT. TEXTILE FACTORY

Abby changes bobbins on a huge loom. A pall of lint and anonymous toil hangs over the factory. Down the way a handsome MALE WORKER smiles at her. She smiles back, interested.

ABBY
'It seems an age we've been apart, and truly is for those who love each other so. Whenever shall we meet?'

325 TIGHT ON MACHINERY

The shuttle rockets back and forth. Off camera we hear Abby reading what seems part of a letter to Ursula.

ABBY (o.s.)
'Soon, I hope, for by and by we'll all be gone, Urs. Does it really seem as though we might?'

326 UNDERWATER SHOT

We look from the bottom of a river up toward the light. In the foreground, dangling from the tip of a submerged limb, is the bracelet Abby threw away.

ABBY (o.s.)
'The other day I tried to think how I'd look laid out in a solemn white gown. Closing my eyes I could almost hear you tiptoe in and look down in my face, so deep asleep, so still.'

327 EXT. FIELDS - SERIES OF ANGLES

The PEOPLE of the Razumihin rebuild the land -- raising fences and sinking a well, plowing down the stubble and putting in the seed.

ABBY (o.s.)
'I went to Lincoln Park Zoo the other day. It was great as usual. I enclose a check.'

An ANONYMOUS YOUNG MAN, standing on a carpet of new-sprung wheat, looks up with a start. From the distance comes a ghostly noise -- the call of the prairie chickens at their spring rites. He listens for just a moment, then returns to work.

THE END